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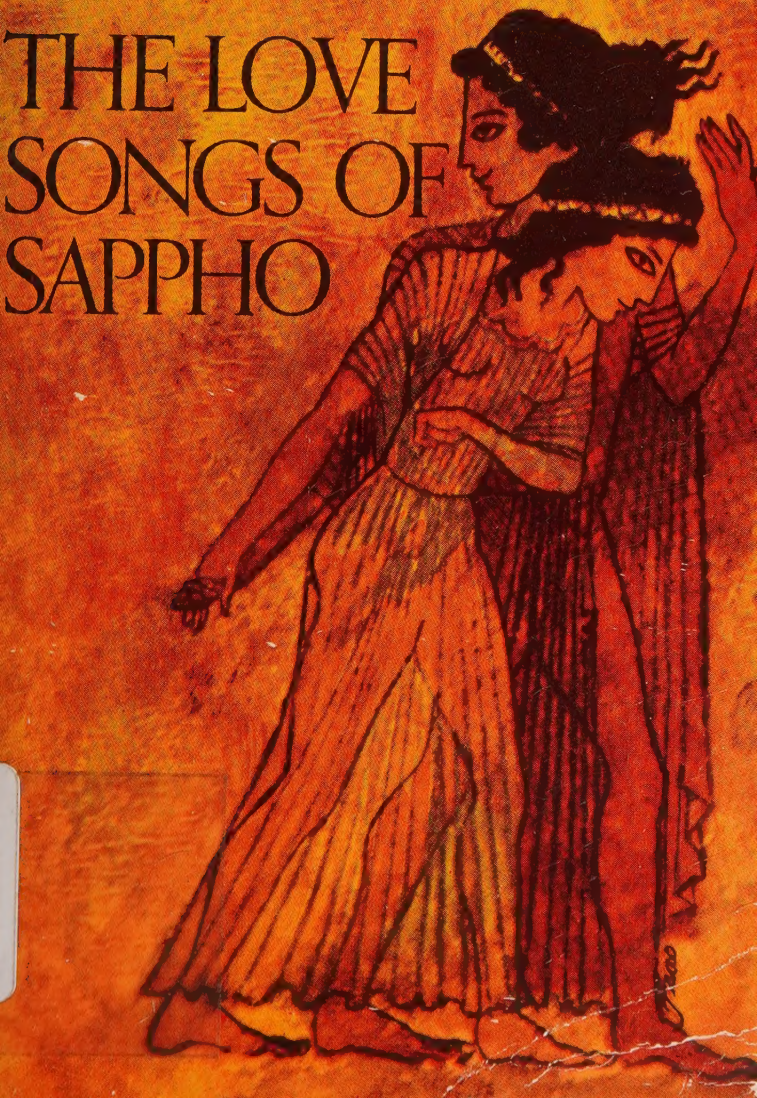
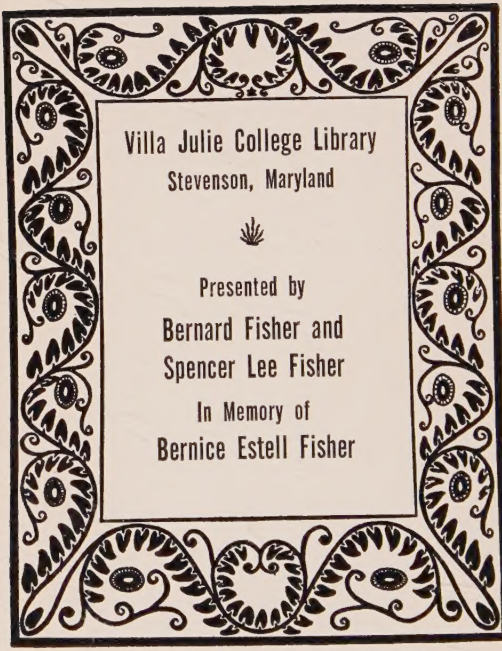
THE LOVE SONGS OF SAPPHO

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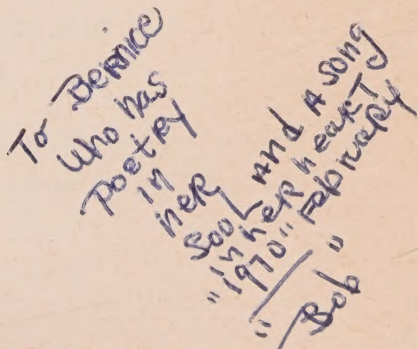
BIOGRAPHY OF SAPPHO

Few facts are known of Sappho's life. Though the year of her birth is commonly given as 615 or 612 B.C., neither date is certain; the time and manner of her death are equally shrouded in mystery. She was of a wealthy family, married a prosperous merchant, and seems to have had only one child, a daughter. The principal part of her life was spent on the Greek island of Lesbos, though she was banished from the island twice and traveled widely throughout the Greek world. Her poetry gained her fame during her lifetime; it remains one of the great personal legacies in all literature.



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THE LOVE SONGS OF SAPPHO

Translated, with Introduction and Notes, by Paul Roche

Illustrated by Katerina Wilczynski

"Words mixed with fire"
—Plutarch

"The flowers of Sappho—few, but roses."
—Palatine Anthology

A MENTOR BOOK

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for ERICA MARX

poetess of no mean flame
who has drawn into the light
songsters from the dark
and dark songsters
of two generations

ἔγω δὲ φιλημ' ἀβροσύναν, κέκλυτε τοῦτο, κάι μοι
τὸ λάμπρον ἔρος τὠελίω κὰι τὸ κάλον λέλογχε
—Sappho (Edm.II8a)

(As for me—listen well—
my delight is the exquisite;
yes, for me glitter and sunlight and love
are one society.)

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Introduction*

1

THE value of our Greek and Roman past is that it shows us what we are by what we once were. It shows us what is constant in our growth. We cannot afford to break the continuity. We cannot lose our memory and live.

Twelve hundred years of ancient testimony—roughly from 600 B.C. to 600 A.D.—insisted that Sappho was the greatest poetess[1] the world had known.[2] After that period, in three or four bursts of puritanical zeal culminating in the twelfth century, her works were almost totally destroyed. Only glimpses of her glory survived in scattered citations from the unsuspected pages of grammarians and professional critics. Yet the impetus of that first universal affirmation has lasted to our own day. It was not, however, until the discovery of the Oxyrhynchus Papyri in the sands of Egypt between 1897 and 1906 that we had more than two poems and a handful of fragments to go on, and though we still have only about one twentieth of what she wrote we are at last beginning to measure the status of Sappho as a poet on more than mere hearsay.

At a time when man's humanity needs defending and the sheer ability to feel and to think is being swamped by mass technology, mass communication, and even mass education,[3] it is salutary to confront ourselves with a record of when we were more instinctive, more individual (which means more "undivided"), and less afraid. To go back to Sappho—two thousand five hundred years—and see ourselves as more convincingly human than in the current best seller, is a tonic. Too much of the original harmony has been lost; too much dehumanized; too much, at the same time, the prey of an inflated humanism. The

* Notes to the Introduction can be found at the end of the Introduction.

circumstances of life and art may change, yes, but life and art themselves remain perennial expressions of man's nature.

Sappho, in some ways, is an even better tonic than Homer. With her we go back and find not merely a "natural" but a modern: modern in a sense that *Beowulf, The Faerie Queene,* and even Tennyson are not. I do not mean to deny that there is a difference between us—*we* do not normally address hymns to Aphrodite[4] or crown one another with chaplets of dill—yet we can see at once that a great deal of her sensibility is ours. The immediate response to the beauty of dawn or the way a little girl picks flowers, things whose esthetic significance tends to be taken for granted in many ages since hers and before ours; the detached expression of personal experience; the ability to throw a glance over her shoulder and watch her most passionate commitments as if they did not concern her; her tongue-in-cheek commentary on her own naiveté: all this marks her as a modern. What is more, she did not use a grand epic idiom, or even a special poetic vocabulary. She wrote usually in her own Aeolic vernacular. And she was not a romantic. Nor did she symbolize abstruse themes. She dealt with love and friendship and affection. Her poems were not difficult: they were known all over Greece, recited or sung to the lyre,[5] mimed and danced. Many of them were epigrams crystallizing wisdom in an unforgettable way. But whatever they said seemed to be spontaneous, and fresh with colloquial directness: a celebration of the human relationship through passion to despair, with tenderness, pity, fear, annoyance, anger, sarcasm, and sadness in between. The way they expressed what they said has been found to be inimitable. No one before or since has ever got nearer to making art appear effortless while keeping it artifice.[6] Sappho's poems have all the projective immediacy the Beat poets mustered when they first came out, together with the verbal artistry of a Hopkins or a Swinburne.[7] In sonic pattern alone, in pure power of audial esthetics, they are like magic.[8]

Sappho understood what many a modern has forgotten: that art, if it is to last, must not bore. It must on the contrary—even when it is out to shock or repel—please. Whether complex or simple there must be an emotional

intensity about it which immediately engages the esthetic faculty. Art, by definition, must produce the sensation of beauty and sustain it. In poetry this is done by welding together the profoundly stirring elements of rhythm and sound into the truth of what the words express. It is not the content apart from the form that makes the words memorable. If that were all, wisdom and scholarship would be poetry—which in themselves they neither are nor were, though for the last fifty years we have tried to equate the two together.

Alert with intelligence, even wit, Sappho never makes the mistake of directing poetry at the intellect. She does not confuse poetry with prose and write to give us information. Great poetry does not immediately demand thought, but feelings and impressions, and she writes to make her hearers begin to feel and think in certain directions. Sappho never sits down to compose when she has an idea—only when she has a feeling.

2

Sappho's Lesbos was certainly as beautiful as it is now and certainly more important. The voracious shipbuilding programs of ambitious states had not yet shorn every island in the Aegean of its trees; the eternal goat, following the path of the charcoal burner in search of saplings, did not yet level down the greenery of hill and valley. Lesbos was a well-wooded, well-cultivated, well-populated island: already one of the jewels of early Hellenic civilization. Its capital, Mytilene—a mere stone's throw away from the opulence of the Orient and facing the fashionable town of Sardis (a day's journey inland on the mainland of Asia Minor)—was a center of trade and culture. Its vineyards and wine were famous. Several of its citizens were known the world over, especially as poets. Homer himself, alive to every Greek though more than three hundred years dead, probably came from the neighboring coastlands. What made Sappho the most important poet in the archaic age after him (and possibly, in the Greek view, Archilochus) was that under her—and under Alcaeus her fellow islander—the art of lyric poetry reached a summit of perfection in Lesbos several genera-

tions before any of the sister arts attained it in Athens or elsewhere. Lesbos was already a fount of song when Sappho was born there—the lyric poets Arion and Terpander had preceded her—and music and the making of music, together with rhythm, movement, and gesture, went hand in hand with the making of poetry. Stringed instruments were advanced, various, and popular. Sappho set her songs to her own accompaniment on the lyre and on the *pectis* (πηκτις): a kind of small harp which apparently she was the first to use. Although she may not have invented the Sapphic meter, her development of it was so individual and complete that it became associated with her name forever.

Among events contemporary with or impinging on Sappho's life: in Israel the prophet Jeremiah was "issuing his thunder"; the great king Nebuchadnezzar had descended from Babylon and captured Jerusalem; Gautama Buddha was not yet born; Solon was making his wise laws in Athens; the coast of Sicily and the south of Italy were already Greek, and the town of Phocaea—a mere hundred miles or so from Lesbos—had founded the colony of Marseilles. In Mytilene itself the astute Pittacus was governing as benevolent dictator.

Though we know very little of Sappho's actual life, it is difficult not to feel—after perusing her poems—that we know a great deal about *Sappho*. That she entered deeply and intensely into her emotions, had a genius for friendship, was single-minded in her aversions as well as her loves, cannot be doubted. Professor Page writes: "Wherever the evidence suffices for a judgment of her art, we find it to be the expression of a reflective, self-critical, and self-dramatizing personality."[9] We can be less certain of what she looked like. The four or five busts of her—or reputed to be of her—that exist in various museums are all several centuries too late, as are the effigies of her that came to be struck on Mytilenan and Roman coins. The fact that she is described in antiquity both as beautiful and ill-favored—"small and dark, like a nightingale with unshapely wings enfolding a tiny body,"[10]—suggests that she may well have been one of those remarkable women who, like great actresses, are able to project an illusion of beauty and who by grace, timing, spirit, and

the sparkling integrality of their persons are infinitely more captivating than the merely beautiful.

The date of Sappho's birth is usually given as 615 or 612 B.C., but it could have been a good deal earlier or later. She was married to a rich businessman, called Cercolas, from the island of Andros. Perhaps he died early in their married life, for he is never referred to. She seems to have had only one child, a daughter called Cleïs. Of her three brothers, the youngest, Larichus, had his praises sung by Sappho for being cupbearer in the town hall of Mytilene; Eurygyus we know nothing about; and Charaxus was berated by his sister in a series of letters for having gone off with the celebrated courtesan Doricha (also known as Rhodopis).

That Sappho was a wealthy woman there seems no doubt. She came from a family aristocratic enough to incur the displeasure of the new powers. She loved and lived in refinement. She traveled, if perforce by exile—she was banished twice—and when she talked of money it was not in the way of a *nouveau riche*. She lived for a time in Sicily at Syracuse, which was rapidly becoming the New York of the ancient world. She must have proceeded through Greece as a celebrity, meeting perhaps most of the important people of her age. Strabo's phrase—five centuries later—fits her well: "a miracle of a young woman," and even the great Solon was an admirer of her poetry. Nor must it be forgotten that the social standing of women in sixth-century Lesbos was very different from what it was, or became, on the mainland of Hellas. The ladies of Lesbos were far from being mere appendages of their husbands and seem to have comported themselves with a freedom that was not to be seen again until the days of the Roman Empire: a freedom not unlike our own.

Given Sappho's own vivid expression of her feelings toward her sex—an expression which paints a wonderful and indelible picture of her sheer intoxication at the approach of physical beauty—it seems pointless to inquire into the inevitable question: Was Sappho *actively* a homosexual? That she was temperamentally, at least, a sexual invert seems possible. That she was a pervert, there is no present way of telling. Scholarly opinion a few years ago

tended to exonerate her—even militantly—from all taint of misbehavior. The whole thing was invented by the Attic comedians of the fourth and third centuries. An academy of females—naughty ones at that—was too good a joke to miss. Sappho herself was a woman of pure and blameless life: "she carries us unspotted through the deluge of her passions."[11] Modern scholars are not so sure, though personally I cannot see that their evidence amounts to much more than: "no smoke without a fire."

The facts seem to be these: Sappho was immensely swayed by the physical beauty and presence of her own sex; but she was not immune to the attraction of men. There is no trustworthy evidence that the moral standards of Lesbian society of that time were low; though a couple of centuries or less after her death they undoubtedly were. No ancient opinion can be found imputing to her the slightest improbity—on the contrary, she is spoken of universally with praise, respect, and even reverence: Alcaeus, her contemporary, calls her "pure and holy Sappho"—yet five hundred years later Ovid talks suggestively of Sappho and "Lesbianism" as if they were inevitably linked in men's minds.[12] She composed the greatest epithalamia in antiquity, celebrating the union of man and maid, yet in one of her most famous odes she confesses with a quivering frustration that she is dizzy at the sight of the bridegroom sitting opposite one of her favorites. However one resolves these paradoxes, the fact remains that we still await a poem or fragment which implicates Sappho directly, and without a shade of doubt, in active homoerotic misconduct or salacious intent.

In the light of some of the more recently deciphered fragments, such a claim might seem to be too categorical. I am thinking particularly of Lobel and Page Fragments 99 and 213. The first, much mutilated, is translated by Davenport (his 101) as follows:

( ) slick with slime ( )
( ) Polyanaktidas to satiety ( )
( ) shoots forward ( )
Playing such music upon these strings
Wearing a phallus of leather ( )

Such a thing as this ( ) enviously
( ) twirls quivering masterfully
( ) and has for odor
( ) hollow ( )
( )
( ) mysteries, orgies
( ) leaving
( ) an oracle
( ) comes ( )
( )
(com)panions
(mys)teries
( )
( )
( ) sister
So ( )
( ) wishes ( )
Displays again Polyanaktidas ( )
This randy madness I joyfully proclaim.

There can be no certainty, however, of the correct interpretation to be put on the above, since the key word ὄλισβος—penis coriaceus—is only dubiously deciphered.

As to the other fragment (213), Lobel and Page do not ascribe it certainly to Sappho but relegate it to the Libra Incerta. Davenport in his No. 54 translates it as:

Arkheanassa and Gorgo
Sleep together as married folk,
Wherefore she is called her wife.
And Pleistodiké, she was her wife
In between Gongyla and Gorgo.
They've given themselves a name
Together and ( ) Pleistodiké
( ) shall be known as
( ).

How was Sappho's personal household composed, and what was her position in it? Here again we are on disputed ground. Certainly she had around her an entourage of young girls who came and went, sent (presumably) by

their parents from as far off as Megara and Rhodes and probably further. Certainly they were taught to dance and sing. Certainly they were bound to one another by the deepest ties and, because they lived in a religious age, did homage together "round some intimate shrine." But in what sense did all this amount to a salon, a school, a religious academy? This precisely is the discussion.

To Professor Bowra (until recently), Sappho's circle constituted a "Thiasos": a kind of semireligious college centered on the cult of Aphrodite and the Muses. Sappho as the priestess, director, and chief personality bound her young devotees together with ties of intimacy and dedication.

> Its cult was not a self-conscious aestheticism but a genuine worship of a goddess in whom all believed. . . . The Muses were honoured with Aphrodite. It was felt that her ceremonies demanded songs, and in song her devotees were trained by Sappho.[13]

Professor Page on the other hand rejects not only the idea of a religious cult but even, it appears, of a school of the Muses:

> . . . the search must be limited to the surviving fragments of Sappho's poetry. And there we find nothing that suggests, let alone enforces the recognition of a priestess or the principal of an academy.[14]
>
> It is clear and certain that the themes of the great majority of extant fragments are the loves and the jealousies, the pleasures and pains, of Sappho and her companions. We have found, and shall find, no trace of any formal or official or professional relationship between them: no trace of Sappho the priestess of a cult association, Sappho the principal of an academy; with feigned solemnity we exorcise these melancholy modern ghosts.[15]

For myself, I see no reason why the whole thing could not have happened more naturally than Bowra suggests and less informally than Page. Lesbos was the famous center of women of refinement, and also of song; Sappho was the most notable exponent of both. Sappho loved young companions. It was the tradition for ladies of quality to surround themselves with companions, young and

old. It was the tradition for women and girls to sing and dance at festivals. Naturally the latter had to be trained, "finished" in the ways of art and excellence. Naturally with such a dynamic personality behind them the girls were bound to one another and to her in an intimacy of dramatic tension. And naturally, in a world which believed in the gods, they cultivated the deities that interested them most: Aphrodite and the Muses.

When Sappho died and how—or even where—remains a mystery. Arthur Weigall is the only modern writer I know of who believes and tries to substantiate the story of her futile love-chase of the young ferryman, Phaon. He reconstructs the date as not before 558 B.C. and calculates that Sappho was in her "early fifties—woman's most tragic age, when beauty wanes but longing is not gone. . . . One must suppose her to have been no older than that at the time of her death, and no younger, either, as is shown by her sad description of her increasing wrinkles, and her admission that she is beyond the age of child-bearing."[16] It was the case of the aging, brilliant woman, grasping at the last possibility of admiration and love. According to this story, the young Phaon—an adept at breaking hearts among the Aeolian ladies—was at first flattered that the most famous woman in the world had succumbed to his good looks, but eventually grew tired of the affair and left her abruptly for Sicily. Sappho set out to follow him, but when she reached the island near Corfu, on which stood the already famous Leucadian cliff, she was overwhelmed by the sadness and hopelessness of her plight and threw herself over the edge. Her body was reverently retrieved from the rocks and brought back to Lesbos.

It makes a romantic story—believed, apparently, by Menander in the fourth century B.C., Plautus in the third century B.C., and Ovid in the first A.D.—but now it is fairly well accepted that Phaon was a δαίμων (semidivine or mythological personage) associated with Aphrodite. He was "a ferryman plying for hire between Lesbos and the mainland, and one day ferried over for nothing the Goddess Venus in the guise of an old woman, and he received from her the service of an alabaster box of unguent the daily use of which made women fall in love with him."[17] Sappho's incorporation into the story may be

based on a later misunderstanding of a mention of him in a poem. According to other ancient commentators a "Sappho" did indeed fall in love with, pursue, and throw herself over a cliff for the disdainful Phaon, but this was a celebrated courtesan of the same name, not Sappho the poetess.

At all events, however she died, Sappho's tomb in Lesbos is mentioned more than once in antiquity. Maximus of Tyre speaks of her deathbed and quotes her as rebuking her daughter, Cleïs, for weeping. But we have no way of knowing whether this was her real or putative deathbed. The fact that she was able to write a poem about it suggests that on this occasion she recovered.

3

I am conscious as I offer this new rendering of Sappho to the public that it is not an adaptation or "imitation" or paraphrase, but strictly a translation. It suffers inevitably from the disadvantages of being a translation and not an original. The translator is never free. He dare not invent. He must fill his ears with wax against the sounds of his own alluring fancies. In every poem, every fragment, I have had to lash myself to the mast to keep from being lured away by the song of the sirens: those voices counseling me to follow my own Sappho. Ironically, I have put this restraint upon myself at a time when "imitations" have once again become fashionable. Poets up and down the land are writing their own Homers and Ovids and Virgils: some of them without reference to or even knowledge of the language from which they quarry their ore of gold. The best of them follow an old and lively tradition. Good luck to them! Theirs is one way, and a valid way, of bringing color back to the jaded eye and redirecting interest to the great originals. As to Sappho, the thing was achieved fifty years ago by Bliss Carman, who made a hundred beautiful poems out of a handful of broken sentences.

When all is said and done, however, nothing takes the place of the faithful translation—of even the literal prose translation. No matter how brilliantly an imitation stands in its own right, people will always want to know, in so

far as the text can be plausibly determined, what the original poet said and the way he said it. That is what I have tried to show.

Confronted by the perennial challenge of transferring the perfection of one language into the perfection of another, and hedged between the confines of hewing closely to the Greek text while sweating blood to give the illusion of Sappho's deceptive spontaneity, freshness, sharpness of detail together with her amazing patterns of sound and rhythm, I have tried nevertheless to come as near as any to expressing both the sense and the analogous sound of the original: what Sappho said and the way she said it. To attempt the first by itself or the last by itself is relatively possible. To attempt both together—her verbal sharpness *and* her musical jewelry—is what makes for the sweating of blood. In expressing both at once I have tried to come nearer than any.

When a poetry is deprived of its original sounds, a completely new set of sounds and rhythms has to be invented. It is not that English is an inferior language for the formulation of feelings and poetic concepts, but that it is different. Sappho is plain and ornate at the same time: in the same line, in the very same phrase. In Greek this is possible: to combine plain statement with sensuous and richly suggestive syllabic patterns of sound. In English it is not. English can be plain in sound and plain in content, or ornate in sound and ornate in content. What it cannot easily be is: plain in content and ornate in sound. I know of no way of saying: "Please come in, take a chair and sit down," and making it sound like the cooing of turtledoves in spring. In Greek—with its syllabic richness and purity of vowels, its diphthongs, its grammatical inflections (which free the word order for euphony), its shifting affixes of vowel and preposition, its not being hamstrung with consonants, its mobility and pace—*that* precisely is what one can do; or at least Sappho could.

To suggest that we get nearest to Sappho by concentrating on her sharp focus and neglecting her word melody is an oversimplification and a gross one. It could only be made by someone who is tone deaf. Such an attempt, even if the syllables are rigorously counted and the lines tricked out to look like verse, results in prose, even antipoetry. As

an offset to all those gauds, all those old clinging-stuffs of yesterday—what Dudley Fitts rightly castigates as "the whole apparatus of factitious 'beauty' "—such antipoetry is valuable. It is a purge, or a pruning knife. It gives us the chance of seeing the places where real poetry could begin. It can lead to real poetry. But never should it be mistaken for the Muse herself. In the end such antipoetry succumbs to one crushing disability: it owns to nothing memorable, is poverty-stricken in rhythm and sound, leaves nothing for the ears to hold on to. A time comes when everyone except the cerebralist—who fabricates his own reactions to art—is bored by it. People who call a spade a spade in their daily lives, people in touch with *things,* are the last to want it called a spade all the way through their literature. Antipoetry finally is as tedious as overblown verse and loses a public.

I have tried in my translations to give some idea of the variety within Sappho's verbal fabric: her flux of textures. I have tried to keep from being the same in all places: to reflect a little of her elusiveness, shift of tempos, subtleties of echo within technique and mood. Sappho was not an Imagist, or at least was more than an Imagist, and if it is true that neither was she a pseudo-Swinburnian the incontestable fact remains that throughout antiquity she was read precisely because, in Plutarch's phrase, "she tricks and tickles the ear."[18]

A fuller treatment of some aspects of the problem of rendering Sappho is presented in the Appendix.

4

As if the problem of representing Sappho in English were not serious enough, textual scholarship has arranged that in this field, where the fragments are scarcer than diamonds, there should nevertheless be a plethora of texts, readings, emendations, counter emendations, glosses, and reconstructions to delay and bemuse the translator. I think I know what Mary Barnard must have felt when in a footnote to her own remarkable version she says: "The texts vary to such an extent and have been emended by so many hands that the translator has a choice of words and meanings for almost every line."[19] The harassed translator

puts his faith in one or two authorities, and in sheer despair follows docilely. My authorities have been chiefly Page and Edmonds, though I have not always followed them or always been docile. In one or two instances I have even added my own mite to the world's stock of emendations. A poet's nose, without perhaps more than a modicum of scholarship, can on occasion lead him to a find.

We have of course none of the original papyri on which Sappho herself wrote—if indeed she did write her poems down, which is not improbable. Our earliest extant papyrus is of the third century B.C.—i.e., about three hundred years after her death—though there is a shard, a piece of pot, inscribed in a hand of the fourth century. Her popularity wherever Greek was spoken ensured that she was transcribed by hundreds of different hands: often probably straight from the lips of professional singers as they sang or recited the words to the strings of the lyre, or, more likely (since the poems were short), from memory afterwards—a method of publication which in itself was a fertile seedbed for variant readings. It is worth mentioning that we know nothing of the form in which Sappho's poems circulated before the Hellenistic Age. Some Alexandrian scholars arranged them partly by meter, partly by subject. There was a Book of Epithalamia in various meters, separated from the rest perhaps as being choral poetry. But when it comes to papyri, parchments, and vellums we have sources dating right up to the tenth century A.D. It is among these—the manuscripts of grammarians, essayists, metricists, and professional critics—that most of those citations of Sappho are found on which we depended before the discovery of the Oxyrhynchus Papyri between 1897 and 1906.

At that time, B. P. Grenfell and A. S. Hunt, in an extensive series of excavations undertaken by the Egypt Exploration Society, unearthed at Oxyrhynchus (the modern Behnesa), in the Nile valley 110 miles south-southwest of Cairo, unparalleled quantities of papyri ranging from the first century B.C. to the tenth century A.D. Many of these turned out to be of Sappho.[20] The papyrus scrolls had been torn into strips and used as a kind of papier-mâché to make the cartonage of coffins; also used as a lining

for mummies, or wadded into the carcasses of crocodiles and other stuffed sacred animals, or dumped on the ancient rubbish heaps along with wastepaper and household refuse. The discovery, assembling, and deciphering of these has become one of the most exciting developments of modern international archeology and paleography. Eventually the papyri found their way into the Cairo Museum, the British Museum, the Louvre, and into the museums and university libraries of Europe and America. Because of the generally depraved and friable state of the papyri and vellum codices the deciphering is slow work, and not all that was found at Oxyrhynchus has yet been published; but the Egypt Exploration Society releases the text at intervals.[21] Meanwhile, of Oxyrhynchus itself very little is known. The town was a Greco-Egyptian provincial capital and what remains of it is hardly more than a series of mounds.

I have arranged my *Sappho* in six different "books" roughly following the line of her moods, and ending with the very touching nostalgia of her middle or old age. The effect is cumulative: designed to give as vivid a play as possible to her varied but remarkably integrated personality. If the method appears arbitrary—poems being brought together which possibly were in quite different books in Sappho's own arrangement—I can only say that we have no idea what Sappho's own arrangement was and that a division of books according to meter carries no guarantee of being less arbitrary. My method has this to it, that where so much is fragmentary it produces a certain unity and movement.

Sappho is reputed to have written nine[22] books of poems, consisting of wedding lays, epigrams, elegeia, and lyric monodies.[23] I have collected—scraped together—all that there is, right down to the latest released Oxyrhynchus Papyrus. I have not disdained the use of the restored texts. Without them it is impossible to give any kind of impression of what Sappho felt and sang about, since often (because of the way the papyrus rolls have been torn across) we have only the beginnings and ends of whole stanzas. Where, however, the degree of restoration has reached the point of pure conjecture, I say so in the notes. These reconstructions—the work of Grenfell, Hunt,

Wilamowitz, Edmonds, Lobel, and others—follow paleographical methods which are fascinating examples of scholarship wedded to imagination. It is noteworthy that where a recent find has by good fortune duplicated a papyrus or parchment we already possess, the restoration has proved to be by no means always wrong. I think it is fair to say that even in the most conjectural of the restored passages, where it is far from certain how Sappho expressed herself, there is seldom absolute doubt as to the gist of what she said. One does not question that in places where the records are blank it is foolish to fill in the gaps with fancy; but neither should one question that without recourse to "historical imagination" it is impossible to make any human sense of the records at all.

It was on this principle (and following the lead of Miss Barnard) that I have taken pains to provide headings for most of the poems and fragments. These are probabilities suggested by the context in which the poem was quoted in antiquity, or otherwise conjectured from Sappho's own background. The headings are supplementary and supply the sense of missing lines, besides giving a setting and a sequence to what would otherwise lose much significance.

PAUL ROCHE

The Stables
The Street
Aldermaston
Berkshire
1966

Notes to Introduction

1: The word "poetess" is a useful word: precise, valid, honorable, and often necessary. I do not agree with the modern inclination to ostracize it from the vocabulary. "Poet" by itself does not always carry the required distinction, and "woman poet" is an enlightened barbarism.

2: There was not, in point of fact, any serious competition even in Sappho's own day. Both Corinna and Damophyla were very minor poetesses.

3: By which I do not mean the education of the masses—we are all that—but the mass pursuit of knowledge unrelated to culture, i.e., to the transcendental properties of being.

4: The nearness of divine forces of those days, friendly and unfriendly, awful or petty, is incompatible with our usual modern outlook. Yet even here I think that Sappho's attitude—warm, natural, amused, detached—is modern rather than primitive, medieval, or post-Reformation.

5: Or sometimes possibly the flute if they were elegies. It is not certain that Sappho wrote elegies proper, though Horace talks of "Sappho singing elegies to the Aeolian string" (Hor. *Od.* 2/13/21). Sappho's surviving elegiacs are epigrams, which are not the same thing. The nomenclature of Greek lyric poetry is tiresome. The collective name for Sappho's works was μέλη, which in Greek covers songs for a single voice or a chorus. But we use "melic" to suggest solo song. When the poems were collected by Alexandrian scholars, sung lyric was dead and its categories were artificial and do not always reflect the original use. The earliest extant elegies seem to have little in common with elegies which were traditionally sung to the flute. The evidence for the true elegy in Sappho is slight. (I am indebted for these observations to Donald Lucas.)

6: "She uses the simple words of everyday life in simple, uncomplicated sentences. The stronger the emotion, the fewer the adjectives. One of her most intense poems (Δέδυκε μὲν ἀ σέλαννα: No. 171) contains not a single adjective." (Ernst Morwitz: *Poems of Alcman, Sappho and Ibycus,* Olga Marx and Ernst Morwitz, New York, Alfred Knopf, 1945.)

7: I am well aware of the dangers of comparing Sappho to the celebrated exponents in either of these categories. There is a grace, a finesse, in everything she wrote utterly alien to the gaucheries of the Beatniks, and there is a pungent directness in the way she says it that makes Swinburne look like cottonwool and Hopkins a particolored quilt. Nevertheless I think the analogy, if restricted to her miraculous combination of plain statement with exciting patterns of sound, illustrates a valuable point. Sappho is a multifariously cut diamond whose facets reflect away from artifice and the factitious even while they embody it—an impossibility in any language except Greek.

8: There are those who raise the question: "How do we know what Sappho's Greek sounded like?" The answer is that we do not, but we do know a given set of possible pronunciations and her Greek is beautiful in all of them.

9: Denys Page, *Sappho and Alcaeus,* Oxford, 1955, p. 86.

10: Scholiast on Lucian, *Portraits,* 18.

11: Arthur Weigall, *Sappho of Lesbos,* London, Thornton Butterworth, 1932.

12: But Ovid is ambivalent. He also talks of Sappho as losing all

interest in her girls and becoming infatuated with Phaon, the superb young ferryman. Fact and legend were equally grist to Ovid's mill. Plautus, also, in his *Miles Gloriosus* mentions the Phaon story. Perhaps they both got it from Menander.

13: C. M. Bowra, *Greek Lyric Poetry,* Oxford, 1936, pp. 187–189. However, in the recent 1963 edition of the above, Professor Bowra revises his position and abandons the theory of "Thiasos." I have kept it as an indication of the kind of question that has to be answered and the kind of answer that may well continue to find propounders.

14: Denys Page, *op.cit.,* p. iii.

15: *Ibid.,* pp. 139–140.

16: *Op.cit.*

17: Servius on the *Aeneid,* 3/279.

18: Plutarch's actual phrase literally translated is: "her songs have a charm that seduces and bewitches the listener." (Plut. *Pythian Oracles,* 6.)

19: Mary Barnard, *Sappho.* Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1958.

20: Generally from the second century A.D. to the sixth or seventh.

21: A service done in other countries by the Berlin Academy, the Società Italiana, and the Graeca Halensis.

22: I.e., arranged into nine books, according to meter, by the Alexandrian scholars.

23: Most of the poems are monodies: *μέλη.*

The Love Songs

BOOK I

Overtures of Loving

1

WINGED WORDS

Winged words
Words made of air
I begin
But words good to hear

2

THIS IS A PROMISE

I'll sing these songs
beautifully
today
to please you
my faithful coterie

3

WHEN I OPENED MY EYES

Hardly had Dawn
in golden slippers
touched me

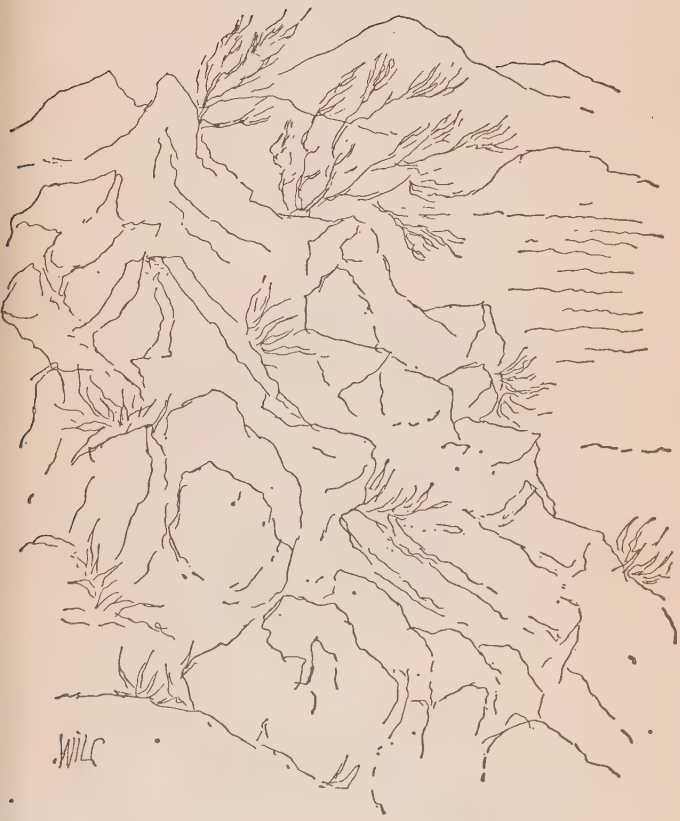
4

My lady Dawn

5

NO

Oneirus, god of dreams,
son of the jetblack night,
last lingerer as the morning light
lifts slumber from our eyes—O soothing god
who warns me of the tension and the strife
of keeping burning wish and act apart:
I do not think that I shall spurn the truth of
what you've shown,
for, with the Blessed Ones' support,
I shall by no means not
grasp the thing for which I groan.
When I was a little child
I never was so imbecile
as turn my back upon a bauble
my loving mother held towards me.
So let the Blessed Ones, I pray, and presently,
provide me with the chance
of what I crave:
seeing that I've honored them in poetry
and in my dance.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6

WE SIGH

O for Adonis!

7

BUT NOT EVERYBODY WANTS LOVE

Young Artemis swore a great oath:
"A virgin forever I *shall* be,
Pure on the peaks of the mountains.
Father, for my sake, agree."
And the Father of the Blessed Immortals
Nodded assent. On Olympus
She is known to the gods as Deer-shooter,
Goddess of wilderness: title
Great in renown. And the god
Who never comes near her is Love.

8

I AM LISTENING FOR

That telltale of the spring:
the melody-making nightingale

9

AND WAITING FOR EROS

The dearest scion
of Earth and Heaven

10

IN SPRING

Earth in many crowns
vests in her crowded brocade

11

I WASTE MY TIME

It's useless
trying to bend
a stubborn heart

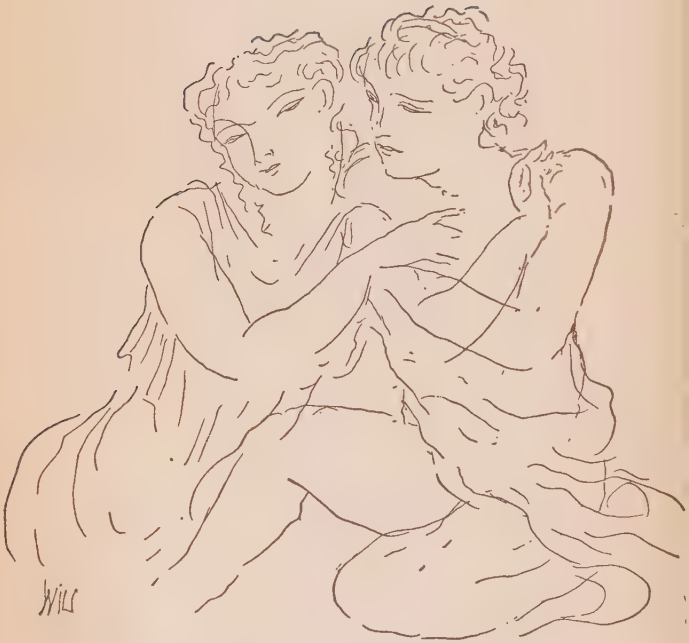
12

The ones I have helped
hurt me most

13

ONCE AGAIN APHRODITE

I have run to you fluttering
like a little girl to her mother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14

AND TO YOU SWEET PEITHO
Man-beguiler: daughter of Aphrodite

15

I SAID
Sappho
Why do you turn your back
on the exquisite blessings of Aphrodite?

16

I shall go—unleashed, unpegged

17

CALL TO APHRODITE

Undying Aphrodite on your caparisoned throne,
Daughter of Zeus and weaver of ruses—
Now I address you:

Queen, do not hurt my heart, do not harry it
But come as before when you heard and you hearkened
A long way away,

And leaving behind the house of your father,
Harnessed a golden chariot winged
By your beautiful swans,

Beating and whirring across the sky,
Bringing you down to the unbright earth—
So suddenly there:

Mistress, the smile on your undying features
Asking me what was it troubled me this time?
What made me call you

This time? What was my desperate heart wanting done?
And your: "Whom shall I this time bend to your love?
Who is it Sappho

That's doing you wrong? For if she's escaping
Soon she'll be chasing; if she's refusing
Your gifts, she shall give them.

And if she's not loving, soon shall she love you,
Like it or no." . . . Oh, come again now:
Let me go loose from this merciless craving.
Do what I long to have done: be my own
Helper in Battle.

18

COME WHEREVER YOU ARE

Whether at Cyprus and Paphos
Or at Panormus

19

I famish
and I pine

20

SHE CAME RADIANT

In a spangled gown
of Lydian design
quite beautiful
reaching down
to her toes

21

THE MOMENT I SAW HER

Love
like a sudden breeze
tumbling on the oak-tree leaves
left my heart
trembling

22

And they laughed—the immortal gods

23

How did you wound so easily?

24

You scorch me

25

Pain drips

26

Sing us the praises
of the girl with the violet-sweet breast

27

I MORE THAN ENVY HIM

He is a god in my eyes, that man,
Given to sit in front of you
And close to himself sweetly to hear
The sound of you speaking.

Your magical laughter—this I swear—
Batters my heart—my breast astir—
My voice when I see you suddenly near
Refuses to come.

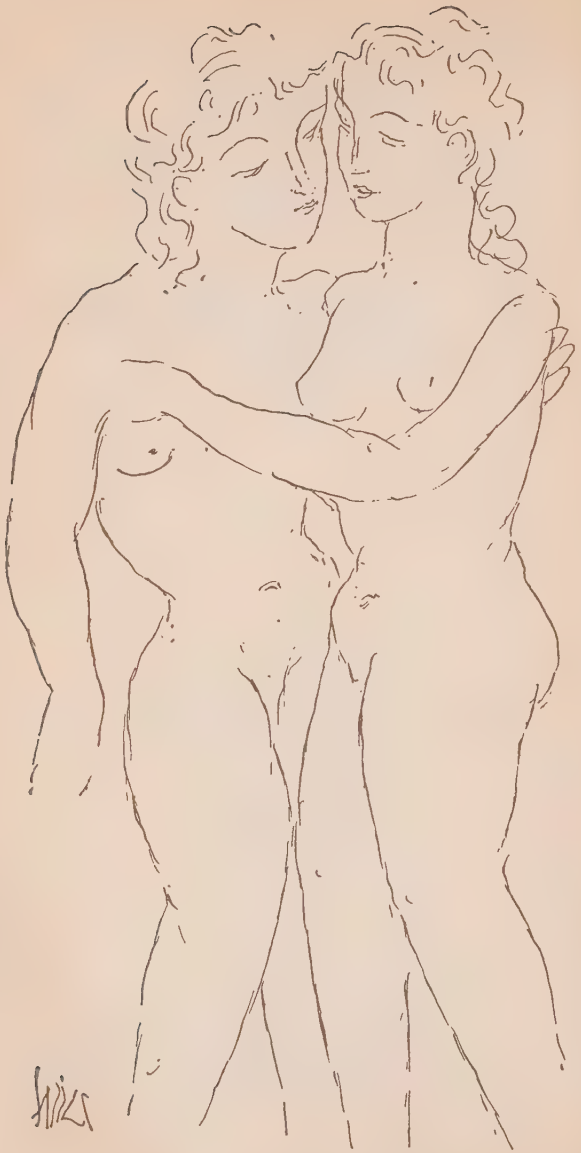
My tongue breaks up and a delicate fire
Runs through my flesh; I see not a thing
With my eyes, and all that I hear
In my ears is a hum.

The sweat runs down, a shuddering takes
Me in every part and pale as the drying
Grasses, then, I think I am near
The moment of dying

28

I'M BAFFLED

I do not know
what to do
my mind's
in two



29

IT'S TOO HIGH

I do not aspire
with my two arms
to touch the sky

30

COME

And I shall set you to rest
on the softest of cushions:
Yes, you shall lie
on fresh new pillows

31

I WANT

Darling, to hug you

32

IN HOMAGE

Stars round the fair moon
veil their own shining
when she's full on the earth
with the light of her silver

33

MAY I SAY

I think no girl
that sees the sun
will ever equal you in skill

34

ARE YOU

Forgetting me?

35

TELL ME FRANKLY

Is there any man
anywhere among mankind
you love more than me?

36

What will your eyes say?

BOOK II

Petitions and Observations

37

AS WE LOVE YOU

So
You
O Graces O
Irreproachable
Ones
With arms like roses!
Zeus's
Virgin daughters
Do
Approach us

38

I CANNOT WRITE

Heart, be still!
No jet of spellbound song,
no Adonis-hymn
streams out from you
beautifully, to please
the goddesses:
Desire the disconcerter,
Aphrodite the dictator
of hearts, has made you dumb;
and Peitho the enticer
from her flagon of gold
has flooded your thinking soul
with nectar

39

For us it is not easy
To rival goddesses
In sheer beauty,
But *you* . . .

40

I AM TOO SUSCEPTIBLE

Yesterday, Children, I passed you
Huddled beneath the great bay tree.
The sight was a potion—I drained it;
A spasm of happiness seized me.
The women I walked with imagined
Me moody and silent and heedless.
At times I hardly could hear them:
All that I heard was my ears drum;
My spirit, poor darling, had flown.
These things it seems are of fate then.
I made up my mind, gentle creatures,
To see you, but then you had gone—
(Too quick by half in your tracks);
Though I glimpsed at a vision that thrilled me:
The clothes on your backs.

41

WE NEED YOUR HELP

Hurry to us here, you Muses:
Goodbye to your golden mansions

42

TO HERA

Form in a dream, my lady Hera,
Sweetest shape, O come before me:
Whom the Atridae—kings of glory—
    Prayed and conjured

When their sack of Troy was over.
On first launching out for home
From Scamander's swirling river,
    They were thwarted

Till they begged you and the mighty
Zeus; Thyone's darling child too.
So I ask you, lady, also:
    Bring back olden

Ways I shared both pure and lovely
With my Mytilenan maidens:
The song, the dancing, once I taught them
    Round your feast days.

Even as the twins of Atreus
With your help and your divine ones
Sailed away from Troy—so help me
    Home again, Hera

43

DON'T LET IT HAPPEN TO ME

At the height of the storm the terrified sailors throw
Their cargoes out and ground their ship on the beach.

My God! I hope that *I* never have to go
Voyaging anywhere over the sea in the winter,

Or ever be forced to throw my goods and chattels
Into the brink: a shame! or *I'd* think so

If ever it happens to me that all my possessions
Fall to the swell of the sea and the Nereïds'
processionals. . . .

44

IN MY DREAM, APHRODITE

A crimson handkerchief hung down
your cheeks, the one
Timas sent to you from Phocaea:
full of her adoration

45

THE PLACE IS CALLING YOU, APHRODITE

Come to us here from Crete—to this holy
Temple: place of your own most pleasing
Apple groves and altars smoking
Sweet with incense.

Here where the waters trickle coolly
Through apple boughs, and ground is shady
With roses, down from the leaves that shiver
Sleep drops slowly.

Here is a meadow, horses feeding;
Spring profuse with flowers, and breezes
Gently seeping.

Here then Cyprian goddess bring your
Lovable person; into golden
Goblets stir your nectar, mingling
With our feasting

46

I talked in a dream
with Aphrodite

47

AND I SAID TO HER

Aphrodite, My Lady,
crowned in gold,
please
may that piece of luck be mine

48

AS A TOKEN

I shall offer you
the rich burnt fat
of a white goat,
Yes, I shall leave it behind for you.

49

AT LAST

You have come
and you did well to come
I pined for you.
And now you have put a torch to my heart
a flare of love—
O bless you and bless you and bless you:
you are back . . .
we were parted

50

OPEN YOUR ARMS

Pretty One, I'm yours again:
far too long apart

51

I AM AWED BY YOUR BEAUTY

For when I look upon you face to face
It seems Hermione even never was
One such as you:
more like pale-haired Helen
I must say you are than any maid that dies.
And your tender beauty—O I shall confess—
I'd give all my thoughts in holocaust to it
And every sense for you in homage

52

I COULD NOT WAIT

Yesterday you
Came to my house
And sang to me.
Now I
Come to you.
Talk to me. Do.
Lavish on me
Your own beauty.
For we walk to a wedding,
As well you know.
Please send away
Your maids. O may
Heaven then present me
With all that heaven ever meant for me.

CONSOLE YOURSELF, ATTHIS

For even in Sardis our dear Anactoria
Is sending her thoughts here:

Thoughts of the life we all led together when
You were to her a goddess descended
And yours were the songs she adored.

Now far above the ladies of Lydia,
Like a moon at sunset rising dewy-
Fingered among the stars and

Shedding her light on the salty sea
And over the flowery fields where the lovely
Dewdrops lie and the roses

Rear and the lacy chervil blooms with the
Melilot—so she wanders remembering
Again and again her gentle

Atthis, till her tenuous heart is
Hung in her breast with a weight of longing;
Till she cries to us: "Come!" and we

Hear it, and light-petaled night with its ears
Catches it, whispers it over the sea
And all that's between

SO I SHALL NEVER SEE HER!

Really, I'd rather be dead. . . .
With a great many tears she left me saying:

"What a terrible blow—what sadness!
Sappho, I swear I leave you
Absolutely against my will."

And I said in reply:
"Go, be happy, goodbye.
Remember me—for you know how I loved you.

"Or if you do not I'll tell you
So many things you forget
Which made our life together a gladness:

"All the chaplets of sweet
Violets and rosebuds braided
And placed by you on your hair at my side.

"All the garlands woven
Around your delicate neck,
Fashioned from a hundred flowers.

"All the fragrance of myrrh
Fit for a queen and rare
Worn on your fresh young skin beside me,

"While on the softest beds
From the quiet hands of maids
No Ionian was so fêted.

"There wasn't a single hill,
Holy purlieu, rill
From which we kept ourselves asunder.

"And never a wood in spring
Fretted with the crowded song
Of nightingales, where you and I
Did not wander"

TO A SOLDIER'S WIFE IN SARDIS: ANACTORIA

A cavalry corps, a column of men,
A flotilla in line, is the finest thing
In this rich world to see—for some . . . but for me
It's the person you love.

There's nothing more easy to prove than this:
Helen whose beauty far outshone
The rest of man's chose to desert
The best of men:

Willingly sailed away to Troy;
Thought nothing of child and nothing of fond
Parents, but was herself led astray
By a love faraway;

(For woman is always easy to bend
The moment she's bent on her heart's desire).
Now Anactoria's in my mind,
Far from us here.

The way she walks, her lovable style,
The vivid movement of her face—
I'd rather see than Lydian horse
And glitter of mail.

We cannot, alas, I know, have the best,
Yet to wish for a part of the past
Once shared is better for man at least
Than that we forget

BOOK III

Converse

56

IMAGES I REMEMBER

Once I saw a very gentle
very little
girl picking flowers

57

Gold erebinthine
grew along the shore

58

And the ripe marriageable girls wove garlands

59

Girls with voices like honey

60

And the garlands were wild parsley

61

AT NOON

The cricket
from under his wings
strikes forth his rapier-sweet songs
as the god of the sun pours down
on the earth his stream of flame

62

IT GIVES ME JOY TO THINK

I have a pretty little girl
lovely as a golden flower:
Cleïs, whom I so adore
I would not take all Lydia
Nor Lesbos (even lovelier)
in exchange for *her*

63

I BELIEVE I AM

More child-lover even than Gello

64

Mnasidica has a prettier figure
then gentle Gyrinno

65

TO MNASIDICA

You, Dica, should weave wreaths with your delicate
fingers
Bind sprays of dill into your beautiful hair
Surely even the glance of the blessed Graces
Is more drawn to whatever is dressed with flowers
Than to the ungarlanded?

66

BUT FRANKLY DEAR

That was not right of you, Mika,
and I shall not let it pass:
your making overtures
to the house of Penthilos. . . .
Oh, what was that sweet noise—
That unseen honey-sound? . . .
A song-burst of nightingales:
Like drops of dew.

67

YOU MAY SMILE BUT

Leda, they say,
once found an egg
hidden under a hyacinth

68

WE ARE GOING TO DANCE

So come now
you delectable Graces
you Muses with the glorious tresses

WILC

69

YES

I taught her well—
that Hero:
quick-sprinting girl
from Gyara

70

WHAT IS

Far sweeter-tuned
than a lyre
Golder than gold
Softer than velvet
Much whiter
than an egg?

71

APHRODITE'S WORDS WERE

". . . Eros my slave
and of course you too
Sappho"

72

So I am not the only woman
who haunts the Latmian Cave

73

I tell you, they have been generous with me,
the violet-weaving Muses

74

And they made me famous
by the gift of their own work

75

THE EVENING STAR

Serenest of all stars

76

STAR OF EVENING

Hesperus
you bring
home everything
which light of day dispersed:
home the sheep herds
home the goat
home the mother's
darling

77

I SAID TO MY INSTRUMENT

Dumb tortoiseshell of mine
turn into a speaking thing divine

78

THE SLEEPY DOVES

Growing faintheaded
drop back their wings

79

The black sleep of night
floods into their eyes

80

PLEASE

Come back to me, Gongyla, here tonight,
You, my rose, with your Lydian lyre.
There hovers forever around you delight:
A beauty desired.

Even your garment plunders my eyes.
I am enchanted: I who once
Complained to the Cyprus-born goddess,
Whom now I beseech

Never to let this lose me grace
But rather bring you back to me:
Amongst all mortal women the one
I most wish to see

BOOK IV

Epithalamia

81

YOU TOO, QUEEN

Auriferous Hecate
are lady-in-waiting to Aphrodite

82

THE HOME-COMING OF HECTOR AND ANDROMACHE

With power and speed in his legs came the herald,
Idaeus, announcing this wonderful news
(Tidings that all over Asia
Turned to a legend forever):
"Hector and all his companions are bringing
From sacred Thebe and the plains of Placia,
Over the salty sea by ship,
A delicate dark-eyed girl: Andromache.
Many the golden bracelets
And purple stuffs the winds are bringing
And trinkets bespangled;
Numberless too the silver cups and ivory chasings."

So uttered the herald, and Hector's dear father
Nimbly arose as the news
Sped to their friends through the ample city.
Then the people of Ilium
Harnessed their mules to the smoothly moving cars;

And all the women in one,
With the prettily ankled girls,
Ascended—the daughters of Priam apart.
The men had the horses yoked
To chariots; every youth
Was there: till a mighty people moved
Mightily along.
And the charioteers drove
Their jingling horses on.

. . . . . .

Then when Hector and Andromache
Had mounted their car like gods,
The great cavalcade set off
And the city of people surged
Back into Ilium
The honey-toned flute and the lyre were mixed
With the click of the castanets.
O, and the treble of girls—
So holy and clear!
The dulcet echoes distilled to the sky
Making Olympians laugh:
And down all the streets there was mirth;
For the bowls and the cups were mixed, and from every shrine
The cassia, myrrh, the frankincense curled.
The older women as well
Shouted their joy.
And the men in a glorious paean
Roared to Apollo—
That far-shooting god and lovely harper,
Singing aloud for the godlike pair:
Hector and Andromache

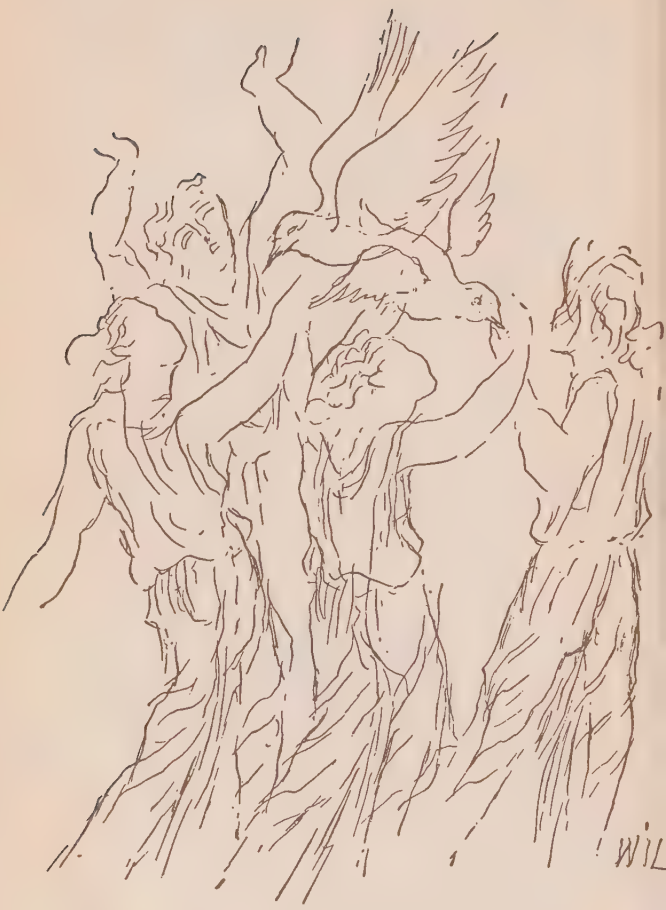
83

AS THE BRIDEGROOM SET OUT WE SANG

There
Stood
The mixing bowl mixed with ambrosia.
Hermes
Took
The ladle to pour out for the gods.
All
Then
Holding their goblets poured a libation:
So
Wished
The bridegroom the best of good luck

84

The cup was gold
with a twisted node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85

I THOUGHT TO MYSELF

What are you like, sweet bridegroom, what?
Like a tender sapling, bridegroom, *that*.

86

WE SANG THE COUPLE TO THEIR HOME

Raise up the rafters high,
  Hurrah for the wedding!
Carpenters: higher and higher,
  Hurrah for the wedding!
The bridegroom is equal to Ares,
  Hurrah for the wedding!
Much taller than any tall man is,
  Hurrah for the wedding!
As tall as the singer of Lesbos,
  Hurrah for the wedding!
Towers over all singers of elsewhere,
  Hurrah for the wedding!

87

WE PREPARED THE BRIDE

We swathed her in the softest cambric veil

88

ARE YOU READY?

O charming, O challenging lovely one!
Yours is to play with the rose-ankled Graces:
yours to play with gold Aphrodite

89

ALMOST A BREATHLESS SIGHT

Fashioned so beautifully, Bride!
There's honey in your eyes!
Your fair and love-strewn face . . .
Aphrodite, without doubt
has singled you out

90

LUCKY

Bridegroom
there never was
another girl like this

91

"We shall give," said the father.

92

THE PRIZE

BOYS' VOICES: Like the last red apple
sweet and high:
High as the topmost twigs,
which the apple-pickers missed—
O no, not missed
but found beyond their finger tips

GIRLS' VOICES: Like the mountain hyacinth
which feet of shepherds trample
leaving the ground in bloom
with blood of purple

93

I THINK

I shall be a maiden forever

94

Listen, my dear,
By the Goddess herself I swear
That *I* (like you)
Had only one
Virginity to spare
Yet did not fear
To go over the bridal line
When Hera bade me
And cast it from me;

So I cheered
You on
And loudly declared:
"My own night was none
Too bad
And you my girl
Have nothing to fear,
Nothing at all."

95

WE SANG OUTSIDE THEIR BEDCHAMBER

Come, bride
Brimming with roses
Of love, bride,
Gem of the lovely
Goddess of Paphos:

Go, bride,
Go to the bed where
Sweetly and gently
You'll play with your bridegroom:

So, bride,
Hesperus lead you
Star of the evening
Happily onwards—
Where you shall wonder,
Where Hera on silver
Sits Lady of Marriage

96

BRIDESMAIDS' CAROL

Meanwhile we maidens beside this door
Sing through the night of the love between
You happiest bridegroom and the bride—
A lapful of violets.

Get yourself up when the morning strikes.
May Hermes himself lead your steps
To just so much trouble as *we* shall see
Of sleep tonight

97

OUTSIDE THEIR DOOR WE SHOUTED

The doorkeeper's feet
are seven fathoms deep:
His sandals take
twice five cobblers five
oxhides to make!

98

WHY AM I SAD?

Can it be I am thinking still
of my lost maidenhead?

99

WELL DONE!

Happiest bridegroom
Now that it's over:
Union you asked for,
Bride that you asked

100

Now go to sleep
on the breast of your sweetheart

101

WE CALLED THROUGH THE KEYHOLE

Hurrah for the bride!
Hurrah for the jolly good bridegroom!

102

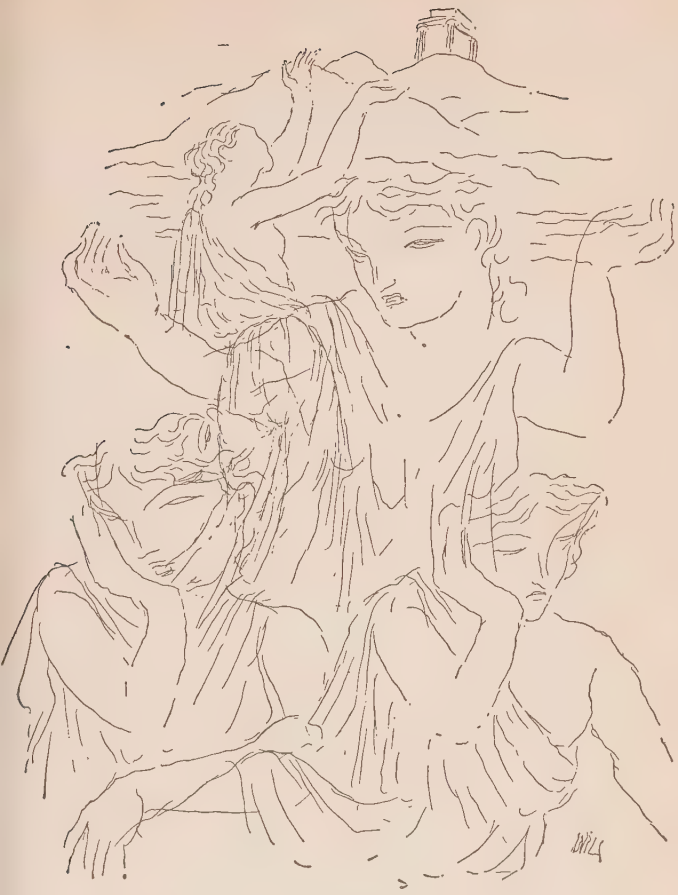
THEY WERE EXHAUSTED AND

The black trance of night
flooded into their eyes

103

OH!

Maidenhead! Maidenhead! where have you left me?
Gone and forever, Bride! Gone and forever!



104

BUT NOW

Let us go dear girls
Our carols are over,
For day is near

BOOK V

The Taut Tongue

105

LIVE YOUR OWN LIFE

As for the critic—
let brainstorms and maledictions sweep him away!

106

MY FINE GORGO

Many happy returns of the day
to the daughter of a great many kings!

107

BETWEEN YOU AND ME

We've had quite enough of Gorgo

108

THOUGH

I'm not the spiteful sort at all
but have the spirit of a little child

109

AND NOW

Love, the limb-loosener, stirs me:
Irresistible, bitter-sweet imp.
But, Atthis, you've come to abhor me
(Even the hint of me)
And flit to Andromeda

110

ANDROMEDA!

She's fired your fancy?
That clod of a woman
who hasn't even the knack
of pulling her skirts up
over her ankles

111

GO THEN

You are nothing to me!

112

WHO WANTS

Love:
That weaver of yarns
Who gives presents of pain?

113

THOUGH THEY SAY

Love can make a poet out of a boor

114

IT CAN OPEN THE EYES

With the larkspur's stunning clarity

115

LIKE JASON'S MANTLE

Mixed and particolored

116

BUT EVEN THEN

I loved you, Atthis, long ago
my girlhood still in flowers . . . and you
A small ungainly girl, I thought

117

I SAW LOVE

Come down from heaven
and fling off his purple cloak

118

BUT I WON'T BE STUNG, SO

Keep your honey-bee
and keep your honey

119

THEN APHRODITE SAID

All was not lost
When she forgot you
And fled to Andromeda.
O Sappho, of little faith!
I too have a right to scold you:
For you should have remembered
That wherever I was I loved you
And could have come from afar as before:

From Paphos, Panormus or Cyprus—
Where I am Queen and a mighty
Force for mankind, and for *you*:
A power like the blaze of the sun
Who lights up the world with his glory.
So remember that even in Acheron
I the love-enraveler
Can unravel the gloom. . . .
Yes, *I* can be with you.

120

I AM GLAD TO SAY

Andromeda has been prettily paid back

121

A REBUKE

ALCAEUS TO SAPPHO

Violet-decked, virtuous, honey-sweet smiling Sappho,
I've something to tell you but—ah!—shame stops me.

SAPPHO TO ALCAEUS

If you were after the good and the fair, sir,
And your tongue were not concocting a guilty
Message—you wouldn't have shame in your eyes, sir,
But say your say like an honest man.

122

PROVERB

Fair is fair, but only meets the eye.
Good is fair as well, or will be by and by.

123

YOU FINE YOUNG MAN

Stand up and face me
friend to friend
Uncover me that charm
within your eyes

124

NO! IT WOULDN'T WORK

If you love me choose a younger
partner for your bed and board:
I could not bear to live, an elder
woman with a younger lord

125

THE LEAN MONTHS

Four months of continence—
Adonis inconsolate!

126

HAVE THEM BOTH

Wealth without worth
is not a good companion:
put the two together
then you've top of fortune

127

DON'T MALIGN IT

Gold is a child of Zeus
Gold is clean of rust
No worm nor weevil eats
Gold
It beats
The strongest human wits

128

YET, FOR ALL YOUR WEALTH

Dead, you'll lie there, woman, unregarded:
No one to recall you ever after
You who had no share
Of the roses from Pieria.
Feeble in the cellars of Lord Death,
Obscure even there,
You'll flit among uncelebrated dead

129

Forgotten—
Loathsome and incongruous word
To all the Muses of Pieria

130

IN EXILE

O Peace!
I've never found you quite so boring yet

131

BEFORE THEY HAD THEIR BROOD

Leto and Niobe
were the closest of cronies

132

A PRETTY THING

But need you be
quite so proud
of a ring?

133

YOUR HAIR NEEDS NOTHING, MY GIRL

My mother would say that when she was young
Nothing could touch a crimson band

Looped through the hair—and no denying—
But a girl with hair like a fall of flame

Couldn't do better than a crown of flowers. . . .
Anyway, Cleïs, I don't have a thing

Like a gorgeous Sardian headband now
And not the slightest idea of where

(With the Cleanax clan controlling town)
A gorgeous headband can be found. . . .

Of course our Mytilenan remnants are
All rotted away

134

I DO PRAY FOR CHARAXUS

Golden Nereïds, please may my brother return here
Safely; please may all his heart's desires be
Amply accomplished.

Also, may his former transgressions all be
Paid for; he become a delight to us his
Dear ones, a pain to his enemies—not to
Any of us. O

Make him want to honor his sister. Let me
Not remember bitterly words with which he
Tried to hurt me—O my rebuke had rankled!—
Before he departed.

Ah, and when he does in the end come back here,
Make him cut adrift from his riotous comrades.
Then if he really wants it, take to a decent girl
And honorably marry her

135

VERY WELL, CHARAXUS

If you must flutter around the steps of the great and
Not of the noble and true, and say goodbye to
All your friends and get so swollen-headed
You hurt me and say I am

Only a nuisance—well, enjoy it up to the
Hilt; but I am not soft-minded enough to
Pay attention to childish tantrums.

Make no mistake, for the trick won't catch an
Old bird who has put two and two together and
Understands to the core the cad you were before
And what she is up against.

Better reform and take advice, for I know
I am not a difficult person, so have
On *my* side the angels

136

THE BOASTER

Ares, of course,
says he can drag off
Hephaestus
by sheer force

137

THEY SAY

No one can count
the cups you quaff

138

I HOPE DORICHA LEARNS HER LESSON

Cypris, let her discover
that even *you* have gone a little bit sour
now that people are jeering:
"My, what an excellent catch
is Doricha's second"

139

I SHAN'T MENTION THAT PERSON, CHARAXUS

With whom you are locked in vagabond love,
supposing that to be beautiful
which is public property

140

Oh yes, it is all quite plain to me.

141

OH, IF ONE CAN

When rage flares up inside the heart
Lock up the tongue with its useless bark

142

BEACH SMELLS?

Don't poke among the pebbles

BOOK VI

Memory and Valediction

143

Yes
they gave me
true success
the golden
Muses
And once dead
I shall not be forgotten

144

Many have been cheated by oblivion
But by good judges
None:
And afterwards, I say,
I shall be remembered
Certainly by some

WILLS

145

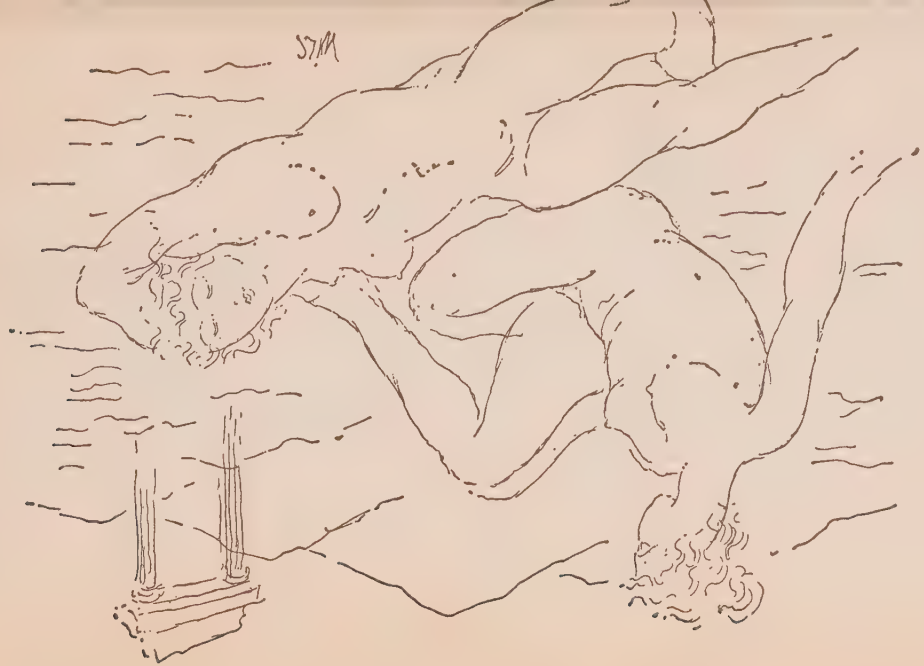
THEY WERE GOING

And I said to them: "Sweet women
how you will remember always
till you are old
the things we did together
in shining youth!
For many the things we did then
innocent and beautiful
And now that you go from here
my heart is breaking

146

I LOVED IT

When the gentle feet of the Cretan girls
Danced in tune round some intimate shrine
Treading the smooth soft bloom of the lawn



147

And the moon rose clear and full
On girls grouped round the altar

148

I REMEMBER

That night of ours.
O, I can tell you
I begged it could be doubled

149

I SEE IT STILL AND FEEL IT: THE

. . . passion, yes
. . . utterly
. . . I can.
. . . shall be to me
. . . a face
. . . shining back at me
. . . beautiful
. . . indelibly

DO YOU RECALL THE MORNING LETTER YOU ONCE SENT ME:

"Sappho, I swear if you don't come out I'll hate you!
Do get up for the love of us all and shake your
Beautiful energy free from bed; as sweet as
A lily beside a pool at dawn drop off your
Nightgown from Chios, bathe in the water; and Cleïs
Shall fetch you your saffron blouse out from the wood-
chest
And your purple dress, wrap a peignoir around you,
Bind in your hair blossomy fillets to crown you.
Come, darling, with all that beauty of yours that makes
me
Mad! I shall ask Praxinoa to roast some chestnuts,
And *I* shall prepare the girls a grandlier breakfast.
One of the gods, my dear Chickabiddy, has blessed us.
This is the day that Sappho—loveliest lady—
Has promised to bring herself back to Mitylene
(Friendliest city)—together with us go back there
A mother among her own children.". . . Dearest Atthis,
O tell me, have you forgotten all this that happened
Such ages ago? Or do you remember?

151

AND ONCE I USED TO CALL OUT

Long life and health—for me—
No wrinkles, children . . . Youth!

152

A REGRET

Ah, if my breasts could still give suck
And my womb bear a child, wouldn't I come
Quickly without a qualm to another
Bridegroom and bed!

Innumerable now are the wrinkles spread
Across my flesh by age, and Love
Does not fly to me, chase me, give me again
His beautiful pain

153

AN ETERNAL CRY

GIRLS' VOICES: He is dying, Cytherea, dying,
the delicate Adonis:
what can we do?

BOYS' VOICES: O batter your breasts, young girls,
and tear your dress into tatters

154

YET I TOO ONCE COULD EXCLAIM

Mother dear, I cannot mind my loom
And Aphrodite is to blame:
I'm almost dead
with love-longing for a stripling lad

155

BUT AT THIS SEASON

Why does that daughter of Pandion
the high-flying swallow
come to molest me?

156

I'M AS LIMP AS

a wet worn-out dishcloth

157

I WHO ONCE WAS

Minister to the Cyprus-born
the wily Aphrodite

LET'S NOT PRETEND

No, Children, do not delude me.
You mock the good gifts of the muses
When you say: "Dear Sappho we'll crown you,
Resonant player,
First on the clear sweet lyre. . . ."
Do you not see how I alter:
My skin with its aging,
My black hair gone white,
My legs scarcely carrying
Me, who went dancing
More neatly than fawns once
(Neatest of creatures)?
No, no one can cure it; keep beauty from going,
And *I* cannot help it.
God himself cannot do what cannot be done.
Certain as rosy-armed morning
Gives way to the night
Spread over with stars to the end of the earth—
So Death follows after and catches
Everything living.
He would not give back
Orpheus his darling wife.
And every woman who dies
He keeps in his thrall in the dark
Though he seem for a little to let her
Follow her spouse,
Piping and singing.
But for me—listen well—
My delight is the exquisite.
Yes, for me,
Glitter and sunlight and love
Are one society.
So I shall not go creeping away
To die in the dark:
I shall go on living with you,
Loving and loved.

159

BELIEVE ME

Death is an evil:
The gods think so
Or would have died—
O long ago!

160

BUT REST ASSURED

Towards you pretty ones
this mind of mine
can never change

161

So long as you wish it

162

ON THE BASE OF THE STATUE WERE THE WORDS

"Only a baby girl, not able to talk yet,
But ask me a question and I shall tell you
With the voice that is always at my feet:
'A present to fiery Aethopia, Leto's child,
From Aristo, daughter of Hermocleitus
(Son of Saunaïdas), priestess of yours,
O Lady of ladies! Be kind and thank us,
Giving our family fame' "

163

WE SENT HER HOME WITH THESE WORDS ON THE URN

"This is the dust of poor little Timas
dead before she was wed
whom Persephone took to her somber chamber:
for whose demise so far from home
all her tender companions sheared
with keen new blades
the lovely hair from their heads"

164

Alone of the gods, Hades
sanctions no measure
of sweet hope.

165

I SAW ON A TOMBSTONE BY THE SEA

"To Pelagon the fisherman
Meniscus his father
puts this basket up and oarblade
in memory
of a life that was difficult"

166

I THINK OF ACHILLES

He lies
in the black earth at last
at the end of his toils.
Oh what suffering was brought to pass
by the sons of Atreus!

167

The understanding gods evoke tears

168

DEATH SEEMED TO BECKON

Then Gongyla spoke: ". . . You cannot be sure—
Or have your eyes seen a sign?" "They have,"
I said, "for Hermes has come in a dream.
'Master,' I said, 'I am lost.
By Juno the Holy, I swear
I no longer care
for success:
I wish
I could die . . . I wish,
I could see the dew
on the lotus banks of Acheron' "

169

AND HERMES REPLIED

And yet great glory
will come on you
in every place where Phaëthon shines—
even in the halls
of Acheron

170

NEVERTHELESS, CLEÏS

The sounds of mourning do not suit
a house which serves the Muse:
they are not wanted here

171

LIFE SLIPS BY

The moon has gone
The Pleiads gone
In dead of night
Time passes on
I lie alone

APPENDIX

SOME NOTES ON THE DILEMMA OF TRANSLATING SAPPHO

LONGINUS in his treatise *On the Sublime* talks of Sappho's style as γλαφυρὰ καὶ ἀνθηρὰ σύνθεσις—which one might translate as "a smooth and colorful style" or "a polished and florescent style." Haines calls it "easy, graceful, pointed, direct and simple—simple above all." Curiously, he omits in this list the most obvious attribute of all: "musical." And that is where the trouble begins. What does one do about the music? It is not merely that Sappho's poems were accompanied by music (on one or more of the stringed instruments for which Lesbos was famous) but that the poems themselves—the actual words spoken or chanted—are rigorously organized into patterns of sound. They have an ἐπιφώνημα, a kind of vocal epiphany, as Demetrius (contemporary of Cicero) calls it in his work *On Harmony*. Plutarch, too, more than once mentions the immediate effect she has upon listeners: "Do you not see what a charm there is in Sappho's songs," he says, "and how they delight and tickle the ears. . . ?" There is no getting away from the fact that the verbal music of Sappho is as catchy and lively as "hit tunes." Is one to ignore it? That is the question. Is the limpid clarity of the image the main thing and—when it comes to translating—all else pseudo-Swinburnian?

To be able to think so would make the problem infinitely easier. It would line it up immediately with much that is most modern in our poetic tradition. One could at

once go ahead (with one's ear as a sleeping partner) and treat Sappho as if she were Chinese. The results would have all the virtues of the acceptably best way of translating Chinese. It would be easy to read, it would be exact and compressed, it would seem modern. Best of all, it would not be in the least contrived. It would be "easy, graceful, pointed, direct, and simple—simple above all." But would it be Sappho? No, it would not. Or shall we say: it would be only *half* Sappho. The other half would be obliterated.

Even if one cheats a little and divides up the lines into formal syllabic patterns to look like verse, it still will not be Sappho. Syllabic poetry of this kind, in which crystal-clear prose is divided up into lines and stanzas by a regular count of syllables, has nothing to do with sonic stress and rhythm. A fortiori, it has nothing to do with Greek prosody, which does indeed count the syllables but only as a means of establishing fixed and unmistakable audial quantities that actually can be heard—not merely detected with the mind. Such a system has very little to do with English poetry either, whose genius I believe to be accentual—the genius in fact of the nursery rhymes in Mother Goose—where the count of the syllables is unimportant and only the count of the stresses matters.

But even this is only half of half-a-story. So far we have talked only about rhythm. What about the actual sound: the sound of the vowels and the sound of the consonants? Can we ignore the richly inlaid sonic gems with which every line of Sappho sparkles? I mean the alliteration, the assonance, the consonance—yes, and even the rhyme—all that cross-linking throughout of every kind of sonal analogy. The truth of the matter is that whatever the secret of Sappho's poetry the one thing that it is *not* is simple—least of all "simple above all." What it does is to give the *illusion* of being simple, and it is precisely the effort to reproduce this illusion together with the beauty of the music that we are asking ourselves if we can make.

The illusion flows preeminently from sound and sense working together and yet almost independently. The sense of the lines is natural, graceful, effortless, and direct. Their sound—the actual music of the prosody—is consummately contrived and subtle. The sense is idiomatic, un-

literary, and often very near the colloquial. Indeed the language is Sappho's own Aeolic Lesbian dialect, which does not eschew the cliché or the conventional epithet where this is right for both the music and the effect of naturalness. The *sound,* again, is formal, calculated, and strictly ordered. In brief, it looks as if Sappho's poetry is, of all extant poetries, the most unlike (and equally unlike), both the Romantic flourishes of the pre-Georgians *and* the purist, Imagist tradition of the last fifty years which has all but done away with the boundaries between poetry and prose. We need not here bother with the first: no one in this day and age is going to make her into a Romantic . . . but we do need to be on our guard against the second, against treating Sappho as an Imagist.

What emerges rather surprisingly from a detached observance of her style—a surprise which I imagine will come as a shock to many moderns—is that, in the Poundian sense, it by no means excludes "bad writing": that is, writing which for all its concision and exactness does often generalize, repeat, tautologize, and is as much interested in engendering feeling through the quality of sheer incantation as in giving information. If one were pushed to make a choice, I should say that it is more like Heine than the Imagists, more like Swinburne than Eliot. One might not even be absolutely wrong in saying that, given tradition for tradition—the Classical for the Romantic—it contains a proportion of verbal redundancies for the sake of musical feeling at least half as high as any "Solitary Reaper" or *Rime of the Ancient Mariner.* Even in the ποικιλόθρον ἀθάνατ' Ἀφρόδιτα, *Call to Aphrodite* ("Undying and dapple-throned Aphrodite," as I have translated it in my third version in the Notes), one of the most intricately knit of all Sappho's love songs and her acknowledged masterpiece, there are instances of it: charm of sound taking precedence over exactitude of information. She does not, in other words, when she comes to writing poetry, play Robert Graves's game of "telegrams": cutting out every word which is not immediately required by the sense. For instance, in the third line of ποικιλόθρον we have μὴ μ' ἄσαισι μηδ' ὀνίαισι δάμνα, which in the purist view would have to be regarded as containing tautology, for ἄσαισι and ὀνίαισι mean virtually the same thing:

"suffering and sorrow." Yet it is precisely this choice of words which gives Sappho the opportunity of five splendid alliterations and one internal rhyme, making this one of the unforgettable lines in Greek literature. Again in the tenth line of the same poem we have γᾶν μέλαιναν "black earth": nothing more than a stock epithet, but it enables her to echo the assonances in κάλω and σ' ἄγον of the line before and delicately to hit again the sound of the gamma. Then, in the last stanza, there is the redundancy of χαλέπαν μερίμναν, "harsh trouble," and also perhaps of θῦμος ἰμμέρει, "desire (heart) wants," which is a near cliché. All these "infidelities" make an unforgettably telling and beautiful impact on the ear, proving to our generation (I hope) what it has yet to rediscover: that "bad writing" in the prose way is not necessarily bad poetry. For if the function of poetry is to lead to emotive response by way of the senses and feeling—and only thus to the intellect—and if it is true that music reaches the senses and the heart more immediately than any prose sense can do, and if in fact pure music does not have any meaning at all in the conceptual order of prose sense, and if finally "melopoeia" is one of the essential aspects of verbal music—then it must surely follow that a "poetry" which hews too directly to the line of sense instead of to the line of sound and sensation is in fact thwarting one half its purpose. The most exact information in the world is slower in getting to the heart than music is. Indeed, the rigorous adhering to the exactest way of giving the sense can obliterate the power of the words as sounds. Besides, if seemingly "bad writing"—imprecisions, woolly words, abstractions—are ostracized, not only is the sonic verbal scale seriously impaired but all chance is taken away of the subconscious ear remaining subconscious, since the intellect is then called upon to do a full-time job of attending to meanings. I believe it is actually against the nature of memorable lyric poetry to limit itself to words which force the conscious mind to remain conscious. Such is precisely the function of prose.

The genius of Sappho is that she keeps a miraculous balance: a balance between sound and sense, between verbal uselessness-for-the-sake-of-sound and verbal precision for the sake of sense. Nine tenths of the time she

manages to give the impression of incredible economy—which is also real. She is as clear as a mountain spring and as swift as clean water running over tinted pebbles. One might say that she is also as hard and clear-edged as marble, but this too is partly illusion. She wrote in fact in the softest of all Greek dialects—not at all the crystalline and finely chiseled Attic Greek of two centuries later—and her imagery is rich and sensuous. Half the secret, I believe—apart from the fact that Greek is an inflected language and therefore is able to be direct even when the music becomes intricate—lies in the actual tempo. It takes appreciably less time to pronounce eleven syllables of Greek than eleven syllables of English; that is, if all the syllables in the English are actually sounded. This is not just because the vowels in the Greek are often shorter but that the English tends to use twice or thrice as many consonants (and consonants delay). The thing can be proved quite easily by taking any line of Sappho's and writing it out in separate syllables with experimental English equivalents written underneath. Take for instance the line: Χρύσιαι Νηρήιδες ἀβλάβην μοι and write out underneath each syllable of it: *Gólděn Nérĕïds, pléase măy mў bróthĕr sáfelў*. Here you have the same number of syllables in each (eleven), the same meter (Sapphic), and yet the English comes out appreciably longer. There are four words in the Greek, eight in the English; eleven consonants in the Greek, twenty-one in the English. This is typical. The only way of keeping eleven syllables in the English, should one want to (and it is by no means necessary since the number of *stresses* not syllables is what counts in the English), and still making it sonically more or less equal to the Greek, is to increase the tempo of the English by giving it a different rhythm: a rhythm in fact where some of the syllables are scarcely sounded. Such a sentence might be: *Gōldĕn Nérĕïds, rĕtúrn mĕ mў bróthĕr*. Here the important thing is not that the same number of syllables has been kept but that a whole metrical foot has been chopped off the line, that the English tempo is now esthetically equivalent to the Greek, and that the remaining trochees and dactyls are still able (or rather are able for the first time) to give the *illusion* of Sapphic meter.

The corollary of such a discovery is of tremendous importance to the poet-translator: namely that the exact imitating of the outward form of Greek poetry, so far from being nearer to the original esthetically, can very easily be further away. . . . Oh, the thing can be done. Swinburne, Professor Lattimore, and many others have shown what *can* be done, but, except in the greatest hands, the effort is liable to end in a considerable disservice to one's own language, forcing it to strain at exactly the point where it ought to give the impression of being most itself and most at ease. Even Swinburne's Sapphics, beautiful though they are, are appreciably longer in each line than anything in Sappho and are by no means the esthetic equivalent.

Is there any answer, then, to the impossible problem of translating Sappho? All poetry, of course, is impossible to translate—a truism one gets tired of hearing—but Sappho seems to be more difficult to handle than any Greek poet except perhaps Pindar. She is infinitely harder to capture than Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides—even in their choruses. If there is a partial answer to the challenge, it seems to me that it must be along the lines I have outlined: the lines of *illusion*—a very different thing from the two easy ways out: bastard Chinese or pseudo-Swinburnian. There seems to be no other way of trying to face both directions at once: of being direct, clear, precise, natural, and simple above all, yet at the same moment polished, colorful, subtle, and in the musical form which, though calculated and ordered, is immediate and recognizable.

Meanwhile, there *is* a way of shortening the Greek line in English even while keeping to the essence of the Greek measure, thus bringing the tempos of the two poetries together. In my own translations I have not always done this—for English on occasion has a right to be longer than the Greek—but the technique evolved was often an immense help to me in trying to decide the great dilemma which forever remains: how to re-create the magic, by creating the illusion, of that unmistakable perfume which is Sappho.

GREEK METERS:

OUTLINE TO A NEW APPROACH

So much has been written on Greek meters that the systems and counter systems of interpretation which have been evolved, the pronunciamentos that have been made, and the plain obfuscation that has resulted would daunt a genius. One would not deny that Greek prosody is complex, varied, and as rich as the language itself, but that it is incomprehensible to the ears of human beings who live in a different age is, I firmly believe, a machination of grammarians. Things are simpler and also more natural than has been made out.

To begin with, every student knows that "Greek metric is not accentual, but quantitative. That is to say, the rhythm is based on units in which the balance of syllables is dictated not by the loudness, or stress, with which it is spoken, but by quantity, or the time taken to speak it."[1] In other words, Greek vowels have well-defined quantities, long or short, which are largely lacking in modern European languages, so that when we read them we have to replace long by stressed and short by unstressed.

This is the accepted view, but it has been so overemphasized that, for all practical purposes, it leaves the heart of the matter out. What nobody seems to have noticed is that the two schemes of metric, quantity and stress, do *not* in fact run counter to each other, but parallel, and possess between them a perfect analogy of metric. What has been left out is this: the fact that Greek and English share (on top of their metrical heritages) a treasury of spoken rhythms where quantity and stress become almost interchangeable terms. Crystallized into principles it amounts to this. In Greek you have schemes of quantitative rhythm which cut across the natural ac-

[1] C. M. Bowra, *The Greek Experience*. New York: The World Publishing Company, 1957; The New American Library (Mentor Books), 1959.

cents or stress values of words. In English you have schemes of stress rhythm which cut across the natural accents or stress values of words. The difference is that in English the stress value of the syllables is not constant, whereas in Greek the quantitative value of the syllables (within certain limits) *is*. Take these lines:

Hĭckĕrў dĭckĕrў dŏck
Thĕ mŏuse răn ŭp thĕ clŏck
Thĕ clŏck strŭck ŏne
Thĕ mŏuse răn dŏwn
Hĭckĕrў dĭckĕrў dŏck

Here the stress value of the vowels is liable to shift according to the position of the word in the line. For instance, *ran* in line 2 is unstressed and equivalent to short, but stressed and equivalent to long in line 4. If I alter the meter (which here is three-stress rhythm) into iambic tetrameter, but use the very same words and write:

Thĕ mŏuse thăt răn, răn ŭp thĕ clŏck
Thĕ clŏck strŭck ŏne, thĕ mŏuse răn dŏwn
Thĕ clŏck. Ŏ hĭckĕrў! Ŏ dŏck!

ran becomes once stressed and equivalent to long, and twice unstressed and equivalent to short. *Struck* becomes unstressed and short. The *y* of *hickery* becomes stressed and long. All this notwithstanding the fact that in speech rhythm *ran* would normally be stressed rather than *up, struck* would not go unstressed, and the *y* at the end of *hickery* could not be anything but short. It is clear then that meter can reverse the natural values of speech rhythm. An even more obvious example is the single line:

Thĕ bŏy stŏŏd ŏn thĕ bŭrnĭng dĕck

Here, *stood,* long by nature, is made short by meter.[2] And

[2] I do not mean that one would necessarily scan it like this but that this is the theoretical meter: this is the underlying regularity against which the variations are counterpointed.

on, short by nature, is made long by meter. There are, in other words, two rhythms operative at once: that of natural speech and that of meter—often hitting on opposed stresses yet coinciding enough to make a fusion of the two within the line. Which rhythm is allowed to predominate depends on the individual sensitivity of the reader. One approximates to the quality of music, the other to that of speech.

I believe very much the same happens in Greek; except that here instead of the stresses being fixed by meter they are fixed by the invariable quantities of the vowels themselves. One might say that in English the syllables change their time values to accommodate the metrical stresses, whereas in Greek the stresses change their time pattern to accommodate the fixed values of the syllables. The important thing—the thing precisely which makes the two metrics share an analogy—is that Greek too possesses a natural heritage of speech rhythms which cut across or are cut across by the metrical structure—be it of quantity or stress. The theorists seem to have supposed that because stress is arrived at in English prosody by meter, and in Greek by quantity, natural word accent is important in English but of no importance in Greek.[3] This is an unwarranted assumption: arbitrary and unnatural.[4]

My conclusions then are these: in Greek and English (and probably in all poetries) there are two sets of sonic

[3] Professor D. S. Raven's proof of this is invalid. He says: ". . . while there is a close correspondence in the quantity between strophe and antistrophe (in the Greek choruses) there is no similar correspondence in word accent." Of course not! Why should there be? There is no correspondence in word accent between any two lines of "The Boy Stood on the Burning Deck"!

[4] There is a coda to this that also needs to be quashed. It is often suggested that we do not know what classical Greek sounded like. This is utterly misleading. We do not one hundred percent know what it sounded like—yes. We do not know essentially what it sounded like—nonsense. We know what the stresses were, we know the possible variations of pronunciation: the language remains equally beautiful in any of them. If this were not true, there would be little point to our studies. What value has this incredible poetry, what equipment for conjuring up feeling and passion, if it is to be reduced simply to a poetry of content—of information unrelated to sound? We do not read the Greek language for the hieroglyphic beauty of its characters.

principles operating at once: the rhythm set up by the meter or the arrangement of fixed quantities, and the rhythm set up by the natural time values of speech. Either set of principles can be given the supremacy. If overwhelmingly the first, we get incantation. If overwhelmingly the second, we get no meter at all and only such emotions as can be squeezed out of prose. The art of reading poetry is to use the natural speech values as a foil to the metrical, and play them off as counterpoint; always leaving enough of the meter to keep it a foil and never letting the counterpoint take over. Therefore we do not say:

The bóy stood ón the búrning déck

though the theoretical meter requires it, but:

The bóy stóod on the búrning déck.

And we do not say with Sappho:

Ὄι μεν ἱππηων στροτον ὀι δε πεσδων

οἱ men ippeon stroton οἱ de pesdon

though the meter requires it, but with Sappho:

Ὄι μεν ἱππηων στροτον ὀι δε πεσδων

οἱ men ippeon stroton οἱ de pesdon

In either case, what emerges from the tension between the two sets of values is a new music based on both.

Basic Feet in Greek Poetry

⏑ –	iamb
– ⏑	trochee
⏑ ⏑ –	anapaest
– ⏑ ⏑	dactyl
– ⏑ –	cretic
⏑ – –	bacchius
⏑ ⏑ – –	ionic
– ⏑ ⏑ –	choriamb
– ⏑ – –	epitrite
⏑ – – ⏑ –	dochmius
– –	spondee[5]

[5] Not strictly the basis of any meter, but found as an ingredient in other meters.

Principal Meters Used by Sappho

– ◡ – ◡ ◡ – ◡ –	Glyconic
– ◡ – ◡ ◡ – ◡ – ◡ – –	hendecasyllable (Glyconic with addition of ◡ – –)
– ◡ – ⏑ – ◡ ◡ – ◡ – – thrice	Sapphic stanza
– ◡ ◡ – – 4th line	
– ◡ – ◡ ◡ – ◡ ◡ – ◡ ◡ – ◡ –	Sapphic-14-syllable
– ◡ – ◡ ◡ – – ◡ ◡ – – ◡ ◡ – ◡ –	Sapphic-16-syllable
◡ ◡ – – ◡ ◡ – –	minor Ionic
⏑ – ◡ ◡ – – ◡ ◡ – – ◡ ◡ – ◡ – –	major Ionic
◡ ◡ – ◡ – ◡ – –	Anacreontic (a rearranged Ionic)
– ◡ ◡ – – ◡ ◡ – } – ◡ ◡ – ◡ – ◡ – }	choriambic dimeter
– ⏑ ⏑ – ◡ ◡ – ◡ ◡ – ◡ ◡ – ◡ ◡ – ⏑	dactylic hexameter
– ◡ ◡ – ◡ ◡ – ◡ ◡ – ◡ ◡ – ⏑	dactylic pentameter
– ◡ ◡ – ◡ ◡ – ◡ ◡ – ◡	dactylic tetrameter
hexameter followed by	elegiac
– ⏑ ⏑ – ⏑ ⏑ – ‖ – ◡ ◡ – ◡ ◡ –	
⏑ – ◡ – ⏑ – ◡ ◡ – ◡ – twice	Alcaic stanza
⏑ – ◡ – ⏑ – ◡ – ⏑	
– ◡ ◡ – ◡ ◡ – ◡ – –	

(i) The Aeolic base is any one of these couples ◡ –/– –/◡ ◡. The following meters use it for their first two syllables as an alternative to – ◡: Glyconic, hendecasyllable, Sapphic-14 and 16-syllable, dactylic pentameter and tetrameter, and major Ionic.

(ii) Aeolic meter includes all those meters which have both the sequences – ◡ – and – ◡ ◡ –. The so-called major Ionic is therefore included, but not true dactylic meter or elegiacs or minor Ionic. Dactylic meters normally have the final syllable – or ◡.

(iii) Feet are not usually marked off now, because they are not regarded as a real unit. Glyconics, for example, are analyzed into these units: Aeolic base plus choriamb plus iamb.

Greek Meters Transposed into English Stress Rhythms[6]

Glyconic:

"Nó," she sáid, "or I'll téll my mum."

Hendecasyllable:

"Nó," she sáid, "or I'll téll my múm at ónce. Gó."

Sapphic stanza:

Cóme, my lóve, to whére I can gáze upón you.
Don't you know that all little girls adore you?
Don't you know that hungrily they will eat you?
Dón't be a fóol, lóve!

Sapphic-14-syllable:

Ónce a beáutiful Húguenot wént to the tówn of Róme.

Sapphic-16-syllable:

Péople néver beliéve pípes in the cóld wínter can fréeze and búrst.

Minor Ionic:

To suggést múrder is mádness.

Major Ionic:

Goodbýe then until Márch the eléventh, nóon, in the Pláza Pálm Róom.

Anacreontic:

In the spríng of Éighty-two, déar.

[6] Having in mind that in English the accent often falls dubiously and hesitantly and the rhythm remains uncertain, whereas in Greek the vowels have fixed quantities and the rhythm is perfectly emphatic from the start.

Choriambic dimeter:

Óh that I máy! Óh that I máy!

Dactylic hexameter:

Bréak with the séas and the téaring of wínds over sílvery lándscapes.

Dactylic pentameter:

Bréak with the séas and the téaring of wínds over rámparts.

Dactylic tetrameter:

Bréak with the séas in the rage of the wínter.

Elegiac:

This is the ruínous state revolútion has fórced on the nátion.

These are the áshes of whát ónce was a próud little ísle.

Alcaic stanza:

There's nóthing yóu nor Í nor a síngle soúl
Wánts móre than lóve and fáme and a líttle pōwer.
We múst be wánted, múst be nóted,
Múst have a pláce in the thoúght of mánkind.

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Williams, William Carlos. *Sappho*. A translation. Poems in Folio. Grabhorn Press, 1957. This is a translation of the single poem φάινεταί μοι κῆνος (He is a god in my eyes that man, etc.) in modern syllabics and stress rhythm. This important modern poet is faithful to the text, but the result is better Williams than it is Sappho. The stresses fall too uncertainly in English to give any idea of the Greek tightness of form.

Σαπφοῦς Μέλη. Munich: Bremer Presse, 1922. Beautifully printed Greek texts on hand-rolled paper. For those who have any Greek this book is an object to possess, but probably impossible to come by.

NOTES

The Greek text I have used is based on that edited by J. M. Edmonds in the Loeb Classical Library, with emendations from Page, Haines, Hills, and others, (and in a few instances my own). Translations of Greek source notes which I quote from the Loeb are for the most part new translations which I have made ad hoc. *Edm. followed by a number indicates the number of the poem or fragment in Edmonds. Where a text is not given by Edmonds I have gone direct to the latest of the published Oxyrhynchus Papyri.*

1

Edm.1a. Meter doubtful.
Taken from a late fifth-century painting on the three-handled damaged hydria in the Athens Museum. The words, uncertainly decipherable, are visible on the scroll which Sappho is unrolling. The scroll is entitled Ἔπεα πτερόεντα, or Winged Words. Their genuineness is doubted by some. See Haines #48/5 and plate XII.

1: From a reference in a letter of the Emperor Julian it appears possible that Sappho placed these words (one line in the Greek) at the head of her own collection of her poems.

2: Libraries are known to have been collected in Sappho's day by Polycrates of Samos and Pisistratus of Athens. Weigall writes:

> Sappho doubtless possessed an extensive library, the books —that is to say, scrolls—being kept in chests divided for the purpose into pigeon holes; and since many modern writers seem to question the use of such scrolls in her time I must draw attention to the fact that Herodotus expressly refers to scrolls of papyrus or parchment as having been

introduced before this period into Greece by way of Ionia,* as of course anybody might have guessed, since papyrus had already been in use in Egypt for two thousand years, and Egypt had been in touch with the Greek world for centuries. The Greeks, I may mention, rendered the Egyptian word for papyrus scroll as "biblos," whence came their word "biblion," a "book," from which our word "bible" and compounds such as "bibliography" are derived.†

Donald Lucas comments:

> Libraries on any scale were not widely available before the late fifth century. Polycrates and Pisistratus had some rolls, Euripides may have had quite a collection. How Sappho kept her scrolls no one knows. . . . Egypt was not continuously in touch with the Greek world after the Mycenaean Age and Herodotus does not tell us how long before his time papyrus came into use. In Sappho's day it was probably fairly recent.

2

Edm.12. Meter, Sapphic.

Quoted by Athenaeus (writing in the first half of the third century A.D.), *Doctors at Dinner,* to show that there is not necessarily any reproach in the use of the word ἑτάιρα or "comrade." Sappho calls her young companions "hetairai" with perfect innocence, though later the word came to denote the trained and highly accomplished courtesans (almost exactly the Japanese "geisha") who entertained Greek men of means.

1: Though we know the names of some of Sappho's entourage, little or nothing is known about each of them or whether they were all with her at the same time. Any list should be treated with caution. The supposed names run:

Anactoria, from Miletus in Asia Minor (also the birthplace of Thales).

Gyrinno, from the island of Telos; once thought to be the same person as the poetess Erinna, said to have died at the age of nineteen. It is now virtually certain that

* Herodotus V/58
† Weigall 192

Erinna wrote in Doric, not Aeolic, and that she lived two centuries later than Sappho.

Damoplyla, from Pamphylia on the south coast of Asia Minor. She learnt to write love songs in the manner of Sappho and seems to have collected round her a group of girls.

Gongyla, from Colophon near Ephesus in Asia Minor.

Timas of Phocaea, who died young. That Sappho wrote an epitaph on Timas does not necessarily show that she was one of her circle.

Euneika, from the island of Salamis near Athens (or possibly from the town of Salamis on Cyprus).

Hero of Gyara, near the island of Andros.

Brochea, if Edmonds' surmise in line 7 of poem 27 is correct.

All the following girls apparently from Lesbos: Atthis, Praxinoa (there is a hole in the papyrus where Praxinoa's name is alleged to appear), Cydro, Telesippa, Megara, Mnasidica, Cleïs (Sappho's daughter).

For a list of the source references see Weigall 115–17. Names derived from The Suda may or may not be authentic.

Two further names have just come to light from the publication of Oxy. Pap. 2293 and 2357:

Archeanassa

Pleistodike

3

Edm.19. Meter, Sapphic.
Cited by Ammonius of Alexandria (writing about 400 A.D.) to show Sappho's ungrammatical use of the word ἀρτίως as an adverb of past time "hardly had," or "just when."

4

Edm.177. Meter, dactylic.
From *Etymologicum Magnum.*

5

Edm. Appendix 118B. Meter, as far as one can tell, Ionic. From a papyrus of the third century: restored conjectur-

ally by Edmonds. The conjecture extends to at least one half of this ode. The attitude, however, is typical of Sappho.

1: What is also typical is Sappho's ability—which seems so modern to us—to comment on an experience or state of mind even while it is with her. Weigall writes:

> With that curious innocence of heart . . . whether it be actual or assumed, she compares her situation to that of a child whose wondering mind is intrigued by something new held out to it; but at the same time, in the one word *anoos* "unintelligent"* she pillories the attitude of those who forbear. . . .†

6

Edm.25. Meter, a choriamb and a long syllable, known as the "Adonius" to grammarians because the three words "O for Adonis" represent metrically the fourth line of a Sapphic stanza. They are in fact identical with the end of a hexameter line, though the Adonius, a colon rather than a meter, is dactylic in some contexts, choriambic in others. Here the words are probably a refrain.

7

Not given in Edm. This is a new Aeolic fragment, first published by Lobel and Page in the *Classical Quarterly* (New Series, Vol. II, XLVI) in 1952. The editors write:

> The following fragment of a papyrus-roll, written in a hand which may be assigned to the second or third century A.D., was bought by Professor O. Guéraud from the antiquary Naham on behalf of the Société Fouad de Papyrologie (P. Fouad Inv. n., 239).

The meter indicates a line of Aeolic dactyls. The authorship is ascribed to Sappho or Alcaeus. The poem is incomplete as to beginning and end, and words are missing in the fragment, which opens apparently with a reference to Apollo. I have translated according to my own reconstruction.

* Here translated "imbecile."
† *Op.cit.* 216

Lobel and Page comment:

. . . More striking is the relation to the opening of Callimachus' Hymn to Artemis. Artemis, still a child, as she must have been in the Aeolic poem, addresses her father, Zeus, asking him to grant her perpetual virginity (ἀἰ πάρθενοζ ἔσσομαι) and secondly to give her the mountains to live and hunt in. At the end of Artemis' prayer, Zeus nodded assent.

The detail of Artemis' prayer is considerably expanded by Callimachus, but its structure and substance are the same in both.

8

Edm.138. Meter, dactylic (Aeolic pentameter, using ἦροs as "basis"): which could be represented in English by such a line:

Swallow O Swallow O why are you going

if we were to add to the beginning the words "Tell me."

9

Edm.31. Meter, Sapphic.
From Scholiast on Apollonius of Rhodes' *Argonautica* 3.26: "Apollonius makes Eros the son of Aphrodite, but Sappho of Earth and Heaven."
Scholiast on Theocritus 13.2: "He hesitates about whom to call Eros the son of; for Hesiod . . . and Sappho, of Aphrodite or of Earth and Heaven."
Pausanias, *Description of Greece:* "Hesiod I know has made Chaos the first creation, then Earth and Tartarus and Eros. And in the poems of Sappho of Lesbos there are many incompatible statements about Eros."
Edmonds makes his hypothetical text from the quotations.

10

Edm.133. Meter, mainly dactylic.
From Demetrius, literary critic, *On Style:*

Charm is produced in association with ornament and through beautiful words specially shaped towards such an effect, such as . . .

11

Edm.93. Meter, Glyconic.
From Herodian the grammarian, *Words Unparalleled*. The words are not explicitly attributed to Sappho.

12

Edm.13. Meter, dactylic pentameter.
From the *Treatise on Etymology* (tenth century A.D.).

13

Edm.142. Meter, dactylic pentameter, if we read παῖς and not πᾶις.

14

Edm.33. Adapted from a citation of the Scholiast on Hesiod, *Works and Days* (Queenly Persuasion).

15

Edm.126. Meter, irregular Ionic.
From Hephaestion, *Handbook of Meter*.

1: Edmonds' ἀτίμασας ("do you dishonor") is pure guesswork, even if scholarly guesswork. My translation "Why do you turn your back on?" could just as feasibly be "Why do you *not* turn towards." There is no certainty what word Sappho used.

16

Not in Edm. ἔμ' ὡς ἀπ' ὐσσάκω λίθεισα. Meter, trochaic. From *Adesp.*46A. Not explicitly attributed to Sappho.

17

Edm.1. Meter, Sapphic.
Oxy.Pap.21/2288 (fragments of vv.1–21), and also from Dionysius of Halicarnassus, the celebrated rhetorician, writing in Rome about 25 A.D., *Literary Composition*.

1: This is one of the very few texts of Sappho (perhaps the only text) which is both complete and undamaged.

2: Dionysius of Halicarnassus quotes the whole poem as an example of the style he calls γλαφυρὰ καὶ ἀνθηρά ("polished and colorful"). He adds:

> The verbal beauty and enchantment of this passage arise from the perfect smoothness and dovetailing of every part. The words follow one another in a texture of relationships that depends on the natural grouping of the letters. . . .

3: Line 9—"swans" (line 10 in the Greek): στρῦθοι generally means "sparrows." Page is against turning them into swans and dismisses the evidence whereby the word can denote any bird, large or small:

> Sappho has invoked Aphrodite to visit her on earth: and here she describes a token of proof that her prayer has been answered. Sparrows were sacred to Aphrodite, symbolic of her powers. They might be seen at any time descending suddenly to rest on earth: and it is easy to imagine that Aphrodite rode in her chariot behind them; no commoner or more satisfactory token of proof, that prayer has been answered, could be imagined or desired.*

All this is true enough, and there is also no doubt that the sparrow was notorious for wantonness and fecundity and that its flesh and eggs could be eaten as an aphrodisiac, but against it is the fact that the ostrich was known as στρουθὸς κατάγαιος ("running-along-the-ground-bird") or as στρουθοκάμηλος ("camel-bird"). In Roman times the traditional bird for drawing the car of Venus was the swan: something which the Romans could easily have borrowed from the Greeks, as so much else. It is *not* "easy to imagine" two sparrows pulling a chariot; and is hardly less ludicrous to imagine a team of these grubby little birds in crowded formation conducting the foam-born goddess in stately flight.

4: Versions 2 and 3 given below are further attempts on the part of the translator to extract the beauty of the original.

Call to Aphrodite (2)

Aphrodite—deathless—chaired in splendor,

* Denys Page 18

Daughter of Zeus and sweet intriguer,
Listen and do not let my heart be routed
By sorrows, my lady.

Come as before when before you hearkened
To the faraway call of my voice and leaving
Your father's house you came on a golden
Chariot harnessed

To the beat of the wings of your two swans teaming
Fair and strong as they hummed on high
Swift through the sky as they brought you downwards
To the dark of the ground.

Then with a smile, O you blest lady,
Demanding on your endless features
What was it troubled me *now,* what made me
Come to you calling

Now, and what did my wild heart want?
"Whom shall I now make over to love you?
Who is it, Sappho, that's offending?
Let her be running,

Soon she'll run after. Let her refuse your
Gifts, she'll be giving. Let her not love you,
Soon she'll be loving—like it or no—". . .
O come to me now,

Unloose me again from this merciless craving:
Do what I long to have done—O my own
Comrade in battle.

Call to Aphrodite (3)

Undying and dapple-throned Aphrodite,
Daughter of Zeus and weaver of ruses,
Keep, I beg you, my lady, from breaking
My spirit in anguish.

Come to me now as before when you heard me
Cry to you far away—cry and you heeded:

Came to me leaving the house of your father;
Harnessed the golden

Chariot—swan-drawn, beautiful strong-winged
Pinions beating the mid air of heaven
Down to the dark of the earth and arriving
Suddenly there. Oh,

Blessed the smile on your undying features,
Asking what ailed me now and what made me
Call on you now and what did my raving
Heart beseech help for?

"Whom shall I now make over to love you?
Sappho, who hurts you? Ah, if she flees you
Soon she'll be chasing. If she won't take your
Gifts, she'll be giving.

If she won't love you, soon she'll be loving,
Like it or no." . . . Oh, now come again:
Loosen me free from this ravening pain.
Make that to happen what happen I want so,
With *you* as my ally.

18

Edm.5. Meter, Sapphic.
From Strabo, *Geography* and Athenaeus, *Doctors at Dinner*. Linked by Athenaeus to the last stanza of poem 45, though on the potsherd text of this poem recently discovered these words are not included.

1: The fragment is, of course, addressed to Aphrodite. It was a regular feature of prayers and hymns to mention all the likely addresses. Milton in *Lycidas* "Where were ye nymphs . . ." is imitating Theocritus doing the same sort of thing, though it is switched from a prayer to a reproach.

2: Aphrodite, the Foam-born, rose out of the sea and first put foot to land on the island of Cyprus (though the island of Cythera and even others claim that distinction). There were several centers of her worship in Cyprus: Paphos was one of them.

3: The Panormus intended is probably either the town in Sicily (Palermo) or the capital of the island of Samos, about a hundred and fifty miles from Lesbos.

19

Edm.23. Meter, Sapphic.
From the *Treatise on Etymology.*

20

Edm.20. Meter, Sapphic.
From the Scholiast (commentator) on Aristophanes' *Peace.*

1: Haines and others read the MS ἐκάλυπτε for ἐπέτεννε. In which case one would translate μάσλης as: a leather thong or sandals, and the fragment could mean:

> Her feet were hidden in a pair of gaily decorated sandals, a beautiful piece of Lydian workmanship.

Hill translates:

> She wore an embroidered leather girdle, the ends of which reached down to her feet, etc.

2: The words occur very likely in an invocation to Aphrodite.

21

Edm.54. Meter, Sapphic-14-syllables.
From Maximus of Tyre, essayist (c.150 A.D.), *Dissertations:*

> Socrates is frantic with love of Phaedrus, and Sappho's heart is set trembling with love (by Love) like a squall that hits the oak trees.

1: Some editors read κὰτ'ὄρος instead of κατάρης which gives us: a squall falling "from the mountains."

2: It is possible that Sappho has in mind Anactoria, whom Maximus of Tyre equates with Phaedrus.

22

Given in Edm. Vol. III, as Adespota 40. Meter, Aeolic: (what used to be called "logaoedic").
From *Adesp.*77, but not explicitly attributed to Sappho and usually considered doubtful.

23

Not in Edm: πόθεν δέ τῶλκος ἔυπετες ἔβλης. Meter, Sapphic.
From *Adesp.*75. Not explicitly ascribed to Sappho.

24

Edm.27. Apollonius on *Pronouns:*

> Ἄμμε: "us" or "me" in Aeolic.

Sappho possibly means Eros or Aphrodite.

25

Edm.17.
From the *Old Treatise on Etymology* (*Vet. Etymologicum Magnum*):

> μελεδῶναι "cares": the worries that eat away the mind . . . and the Aeolic writers talk of pain as σταλαγμός "a dripping"; compare Sappho . . .

26

Edm.42. Meter, Sapphic.
From a second-century papyrus. Only four words in the Greek, included somewhat unconvincingly by Edmonds in the last stanza of his No. 42 (my poem No. 152).

27

Edm.2. Meter, Sapphic.
Quoted by "Longinus," the Greek philosopher and essayist, writing about 250 A.D., *On the Sublime.** The poem is incomplete but with *Call to Aphrodite* (17) is one of the most famous of all Sappho's love songs. Catullus—

* It is now generally agreed that this Longinus cannot have written the work in question, which quotes nothing later than the age of Augustus.

middle of the first century B.C.—in the course of his tortured affair with "Lesbia" wrote a version of it which became celebrated. Plutarch, writing about 70 A.D., also mentions it.

1: It is not certain to whom the poem is addressed, though it is often called *The Ode to Anactoria.* Perhaps it refers to Atthis. From poem 53 it seems that Anactoria had been the favorite of Atthis rather than of Sappho.

2: Longinus in his treatise says:

> Sappho . . . in every case renders the symptoms of love-madness by its actual and visible concomitants. But where exactly does she show her genius? Precisely in the skill with which she first chooses then combines the best and most typical of those symptoms.

After quoting the poem by way of illustration, he goes on:

> Is it not astonishing how Sappho beats and drives into it soul and body, hearing, speech, sight, and flesh—all as distinct elements—yet by opposites is both frozen and scorched, raves and is sane, and actually fears she is nearly dead, so that she expresses not one passion but a congress of passions?

3: Line 7: I have adopted Page as against Edmonds. In Edm. the line runs:

ὥς γὰρ ἔς τ'ἴδω, Βρόχε', ὥς με φώνας
(My voice when I see you, O Brochea!)

4: All that is left of the fifth stanza is the first line:

ἀλλὰ πὰν τολμάτον ἐπεὶ πένητα
(But I must bear with it all because now I'm a beggar. . . .)

28

Edm.52. Meter, Sapphic-14-syllables.
From Chrisippus, grammarian and Stoic philosopher c.220 B.C., *On Negatives.*

29

Edm.53. Meter, Sapphic-14-syllables.
From Herodian the grammarian, *Words Without Parallel.*

30

Edm.56 and 57. Meter, Sapphic-14-syllables.
From Herodian the grammarian, *Words Without Parallel:* on the use of the word τύλη "cushion."

31

Edm.29. Meter, Sapphic.
From Julian the Apostate (last pagan Roman emperor) in *Letter to Eugenius:*

> Yes, I should even fly to the foot of your mountain so that I could, in Sappho's words, my beloved, embrace you.

32

Edm.3. Meter, Sapphic.
From Eustathius, literary critic, on the *Iliad.* Confirmed by Julian, *Letters* 19.

33

Edm.72. Meter, choriambic (greater Asclepiad).
From Chrysippus, grammarian, *Negatives.*

1: It is not known to which of her young companions Sappho refers.

34

Edm.124. Meter, perhaps choriambic.
Apollonius on *Pronouns.*

35

Edm.22. Meter, Sapphic.
Apollonius on *Pronouns:* as used by the Aeolic writers.

36

Edm.132. *Treatise on Words* (*Etymologicum Magnum*).

37

Edm.68. Meter, choriambic (greater Asclepiad), i.e., Sapphic-16-syllables.
From the *Argument to Theocritus,* No. 28.

1: Usually put among Sappho's Epithalamia. Possibly but not certainly the opening of a bridal song.

38

Edm.Appendix 86A. Meter, Sapphic with a form of Glyconic.
A comparatively new fragment, first restored by Edmonds in the Cambridge Philological Society's *Proceedings,* 1927. Given in Lobel *Sapphous Mele* p. 80.

1: Weigall comments:

> Sappho . . . supplies a sad little picture of herself vainly trying to write what was obviously a commissioned hymn to Adonis, but being distracted by her own thoughts.*

39

Not given in Edm. although it is certainly part of his fragment 86 and my No. 53. They are given clearly in Lobel and Page as lines 21 and 22.

40

Edm.118A, Appendix. Meter, Sapphic-16-syllables.
Almost nothing remains of the original. I have translated Edmonds' reconstruction freely, making sense (perhaps) of a baffling *non sequitur.*

41

Edm.129. Meter, trochaic.
From Hephaestion, *Handbook of Meter.*

42

Edm.40. Meter, Sapphic.
Second- and third-century papyri: Oxy.Pap.1231 fragment I, col.ii/2–21+2166 (a)/3; and 2289 fragment 9.

1: Lines 11 to 20 reconstructed by Wiliamowitz, Vitelli, Edmonds, and others: largely conjectural.

2: Sappho is asking for a same passage back to Mytilene

* Weigall 183

after a tour abroad. Weigall thinks she may be returning from a visit to the island of Samos, a journey by sea of about a hundred and fifty miles from Lesbos. Since Samos was a recognized center of Greek culture and the chief seat of the worship of the goddess Hera, it is inconceivable that Sappho did not at some time visit it. Edmonds entertains the possibility that she is here preparing to embark at Syracuse for Mytilene after hearing of the amnesty from her (second) exile.

3: Thyone was the deified Semele, whom Zeus impregnated during a visitation of thunder and lightning, thus engendering the god Dionysus.

43

Edm.41. Meter, Sapphic.
From a second-century papyrus: Oxy.Pap.1931/9. Very little of the text is certain: reconstructed conjecturally by Edmonds.

1: Again we do not know if Sappho had a specific voyage in mind.

2: Merchant vessels were large. Sail power was supplemented by oars; speed must have been about five knots. See Weigall 239, Apollonius of Rhodes i/601 ff., Herodotus iv/86, Thucydides ii/97 and many other citations.

44

Edm.87. Meter, Aeolic.
From Athenaeus, *Doctors at Dinner,* commenting on a piece about headkerchiefs he had come across in a book called *The Guide to Asia.* He related the information to Sappho's lines.

1: The poem recounts (probably) a dream: Timas has sent the handkerchief for the statue of Aphrodite in Sappho's house in Lesbos. This perhaps is Sappho's letter of thanks.

2: Timas, who died young (see poem 163) was an Ionian from Phocaea, a city on the mainland of Asia Minor south of Mytilene. It was the northernmost member of the important Ionian Confederacy.

3: πορφύρα: "purple," or shades of dark red: strictly the "purple-fish," the Purpura and the Murex, species of shellfish. Tyre on the coast of Syria became the center of the purple trade. Because of its costliness purple became the color of kings.

45

Only fragments given by Edm. in 4 and 6. Meter, Sapphic. This poem, written on a potsherd in a hand assigned to the third century B.C., is one of the oldest records we have of the text of Sappho. The poem is not complete: the beginning and probably the end are missing. Hermogenes, *Kinds of Style,* writing about 170 A.D., quotes the second stanza (Edm.4). This is the description that has often been identified with the Garden of the Nymphs which Demetrius (writing on style about 150 A.D.) says Sappho sang of. Athenaeus, *Doctors at Dinner,* quotes all but the beginning of the fourth stanza (writing about 230 A.D.)

1: Cox (79), commenting on the second stanza (which was then thought to be a fragment on its own), says:

> The sound of the words, the repetition of the long vowels, particularly ω, the poetic imagery of the whole and the drowsy cadence of the last two words gives this fragment a combination of qualities probably not surpassed in any language.*

2: Line 10 (in the Greek and English): prior to Page most editors accepted ἀι δ'ἄνητοι ("and the dill") instead of ἀι δ'ἄηται ("and the rushes of wind"). Taking the former reading and keeping πνέοισιν ("they blow"), I should then change my rendering to:

> Here is a meadow, horses feeding,
> Spring profuse with flowers, and scented
> Dill with breezes.

3: Fourth stanza: Athenaeus does not give the first line as it appears to be written on the shard. He has simply: ἔλθε Κύπρι ("come, Cypris"). On the shard there appears

* Cox 79

to be ἔνθα δή σὺ ("there indeed you"), then a word of two syllables is missing, then comes ἔλοισα Κύπρι ("bring, Cypris") finishing the line. The missing word looks as though it may have been στεμματ' and although Page doubts the τ and ε this is what I have translated.

4: The first mention of frankincense in extant Greek literature. Homer nowhere speaks of the burning of incense. It was probably introduced from Egypt (where it was in regular use long before the Mycenean era) little if at all earlier than the seventh century B.C. See Denys Page, 36.

46

Edm.123. Hephaestion, *Handbook of Meter,* exemplifying Ionic trimeter.

47

Edm.9. Meter, Sapphic.
Apollonius, *Syntax.*

1: Hill translates: "May I win the toss this time."

48

Edm.7. Meter, Sapphic.
Apollonius, *Pronouns.*

1: White she-goats were sacrificed to Aphrodite Pandemos (All the People's).

49

Edm.89. Meter, choriambic.
Adapted from Julian, *Letter to Iamblichus.*

50

Edm.96. Meter, choriambic.
Herodian, grammarian, *Words Without Parallel.*

1: Haines thinks the fragment is possibly from Alcaeus. There are numerous readings.

51

Edm.44. Meter, Sapphic.
From a second-century papyrus: Oxy.Pap.1231/14. Heavily reconstructed by Edmonds.

1: The name of the girl is unknown. Helen, mother of Hermione, is one move more divine.

52

Edm.46. Meter, Sapphic.
From a second-century papyrus. Heavily reconstructed by Hunt, Lobel, and Edmonds.

1: It is not known to whom Sappho is speaking.

2: In line 5, Page's *στείχομεν γὰρ ἐς γάμον* is right and supersedes Edmonds' guess of *πλάσιον*.

53

Edm.86. Meter, a mixture of hendecasyllable with Glyconic.
From a sixth-century parchment. Much of the first stanza is lost and the name "Atthis" is conjectural. Page assumes the poem to have been longer by five or six stanzas, of which he gives only scattered words. See notes to Nos. 38 and 39. Page seems to give the total number of lines in this poem as thirty-six. My text is compiled mainly from Edmonds and Page, except for the last stanza which I adopt from Hill.

1: This is a song to comfort Atthis (see poem 109) who has lost a favorite companion.

2: Sardis: capital of Lydia in Asia Minor. A place of culture and sophistication.

3: Line 9 of the Greek (7 and 8 in the English): I make a new suggestion for the perplexing *βροδοδάκτυλος* ("rosy-fingered"): even at sunset the moon can hardly be described as that. If two letters are changed, *β* and *δ*, we get *δροσοδάκτυλος* ("dewy-fingered"). Diffidently I suggest that this is what Sappho wrote and I print it in my text.

Edm.83. Meter, mainly Glyconic: the third line of each stanza has an extra dactyl.
From a sixth-century parchment.

1: The poem may be a record of Sappho's painful separation from Atthis, her favorite (see note on poem 109). Bowra's comment is: "words of sheer and absolute sorrow."* Page with his customary astringency says:

> It may be that Sappho was distressed, and truly sought consolation in tender memories; or it may be that she was more concerned to entertain her audience with a description of delights which they at least have not yet forgone. The sorrowful leave-taking may be no more than a conventional occasion for that description. The summary narrative of the parting, the self-control of Sappho, and the great length and placid spirit of the tale of their pleasures, are all easily reconciled with such a conception of the purpose of the poem as a whole.†

2: Professor A. W. Gomme writes: "Surely Schubart was right in suggesting, as he once did, that the first line was spoken by the girl who was leaving. . . . It is not Sappho speaking of her *present* despair by contrast with the comforting words she used to her companion (vv.6–20, the rest of the poem), as Page understands it. It is she, not Sappho, who is weeping and in despair. . . . This is clearer if, as Page suggests we should do, we mark a pause at the end of v.2, so that v.3 will mean "this too she often said to me." (*Journal of Hellenic Studies,* LXXVV [Part II] 1957.)

3: 8th stanza: tantalizingly incomplete. Page allows only:

Κὰι στρώμν[αν ἐ]πὶ μολθάκαν
ἀπάλαν πα. [ ] . . . ων
ἐξίησ πόθο[ν]. νίδων
("And on soft beds . . . you would satisfy your longing. . . .")

He adds characteristically:

* Bowra 197
† Denys Page 83

There are obvious indications that it contained matter incompatible with the modern theory of Sappho's character.* No useful purpose would be served by reporting the desperate shifts by which some modern scholars have attempted to eliminate these indications.†

But Edmonds writes:

... the reference is doubtless to eating and drinking; we are not justified, *in this context,* in putting any other interpretation upon the passage.‡

I have adhered to Edmonds rather than Page.

4: Edmonds has this note:

Greek men (after Homer) reclined at meals; *at Athens* it was usual for the women of the household to dine apart and to sit; but the hetairai when sharing the men's symposia reclined like them.§

It should be noted, however, that this is almost certainly not true of Sappho's Lesbos, where women had equal status with men (or almost).

55

Edm.38. Meter, Sapphic.
From a second-century papyrus: Oxy.Pap.1231 fragment i+2166(a)2.

1: This poem was first made known to the world by the Egypt Exploration Society in 1914. My text is principally from Page, except for lines 12 to 14 and the whole of the sixth stanza (which is from Edmonds and largely conjectural). The poem is almost complete.

2: It is apparent that Anactoria had married and left Sappho's circle to go and live in Lydia. See poem 53.

3: The meaning of the second stanza depends on whether we read with Edmonds περσκέθοισα "surpassed," or with

* Page implies that by this theory Sappho is whitewashed from all taint of Lesbianism. For his own theory, far less favorable to Sappho, see his *Sappho and Alcaeus,* pp. 142–46.
† Denys Page 83
‡ Edmonds 433
§ *Ibid.* 433

Page περσκόπεισα "had examined," "was acquainted with." I have taken the first. The sense of the second would be that Helen, though she had wide experience of male excellence, chose the deplorable Paris—because she loved him—a testimony to the blinding power of love. Unfortunately, the rest of the text in either reading does not support such clear sense. I have taken περσκέθοισα from Edmonds, but the rest of the verse from Page.

56

Edm.107. Meter, choriambic.
From Athenaeus, *Doctors at Dinner,* Clearchus speaking:

> It is quite natural that those who see themselves as beautiful and blooming should gather flowers. . . .

After which he uses Sappho's words indirectly.

57

Edm.139. Meter, dactylic hexameter.
From Athenaeus, *Doctors at Dinner.*

1: The erebinthine seems to have been a kind of vetch or pulse: in other words a plant belonging to the pea family. Peas, beans, lentils, were all familiar to the Greeks of Sappho's day. I find it difficult to believe she did not mean broom here.

58

Edm.67. Meter, 14-syllable.
From the Scholiast on Aristophanes:

> Young people and lovers used to weave garlands. This refers to the custom among the ancients whereby the women wove garlands; cf. Sappho.

1: Edmonds thinks this line may belong to the Ode to Hector and Andromache, poem 82.

59

Edm.30. Meter, Sapphic.
Reconstituted from a citation by Philostratus, *Pictures,* and from Aristaenetus, *Letters.* The former:

And in this way the girls vied with one another: rosy-armed, pert-eyed, lovely-cheeked, honey-voiced—this (last) is Sappho's exquisite image.

60

Edm.64. Meter, Glyconic.
From Pollux, *Vocabulary:* "Anacreon . . . says that dill (anise) too was used for garlands, as indeed by Sappho and Alcaeus. The two latter also speak of parsley."

The word used is Σελίνον (Selinon). It is not certain which of the enormous family of the Umbelliferae is meant. The leaves of the water parsley—"apium graveolens," allied to our celery—were often used for chaplets on account of their strong fragrance. Crowns of wild parsley—"that long remains green," in Virgil's later description—were given as prizes in the Isthmian and Nemean games. By the time of Pindar (not long after Sappho), this seems to have been a wreath of dry "Selinon."

61

Edm.94. Meter, Aeolic.
From Demetrius on *Style:*

One might adduce many similar instances of charm. There can be charm, too, in the form of a trope or metaphor, as of the cricket . . .

Demetrius does not specifically assign this description to Sappho.

62

Edm.130. Meter, trochaic.
Hephaestion, *Handbook of Meter.*

1: Cleïs appears to have been Sappho's only child, named after Sappho's mother. Weigall thinks she may have been born during the exile in Sicily, on the ground that the Cleïs in poem 150 (if indeed the text is correct) was obviously old enough to help about the house when Sappho was still young. She is mentioned altogether three times in Sappho's extant fragments. See also poem 133.

63

Edm.95. Meter, choriambic.
From Zenobius (c.130 A.D.), *Centuries of Proverbs:*

> [The expression is] used of those who die young, or of people who love children but spoil them. For Gello was a girl who died before her time, and the inhabitants of Lesbos say her ghost haunts little children; and they put down to her the death of those that die early. It comes in Sappho.

Gello causes the death of little children by her famished kisses.

64

Edm.115. Meter, Ionic a majore: treated by modern metricists as a form of choriambic.
From Hephaestion, *Handbook of Meter.*

1: Mnasidica must be the same girl as the Dica of the next fragment (65). Nothing has come to light about her.

2: Gyrinno or Gyrinna is mentioned by Maximus of Tyre, the essayist, who draws a parallel between Sappho's circle and Socrates' and sets Gyrinno first as corresponding to Alcibiades, Socrates' favorite. Weigall thinks she is to be identified with the poetess Erinna, who came from the island of Telos off Rhodes near the southwestern coast of Asia Minor. Erinna composed an epic poem of three hundred lines, called *The Distaff,* which was famous in antiquity. Only a few lines remain. She died at the age of nineteen. It is now generally acknowledged that she wrote in Doric, not Aeolic, about two hundred years *after* Sappho.

65

Edm.117. Meter, Sapphic-16-syllables.
Oxy.Pap.XV/1787/33, and from Athenaeus, *Doctors at Dinner* (on garlands):

> Aeschylus . . . says plainly that the reason we put wreaths on our heads is to honor Prometheus and make up for his

chains. . . . But Sappho gives a simpler reason than atonement for our self-crowning and says . . .

66

Not in Edm. but D 68 and LP 65. From a third-century papyrus: Oxy.Pap.1787.6. Meter, Ionic tetrameter of 16 syllables.
More than half of the extant lines are missing. I have been jejune but made my own reconstruction. Barnstone suggests that Mika is a shortened form of Mnasidica. Penthilos (though himself long dead) was still an important political name in Lesbos.

67

Edm.97. Meter, perhaps choriambic.
From the *Treatise on Etymology*.

1: According to one tradition, Leda brought forth *two* eggs after her affair with Zeus-turned-swan. One hatched Helen and Clytemnestra, and the other the twins Castor and Pollux.

2: Though we translate the word ὑάκινθος by "hyacinth," it is by no means certain what flower was meant. Cox says:

> The Greek word ὑάκινθος does not mean the flower which at the present day is called "hyacinth." The Greek name was applied to several flowers, of which one was almost certainly the larkspur, and another, as noted elsewhere (in the fragment, for instance) the Iris.*

3: If one reads ὑακινθινον instead of ὑακινθωι as I have done, one might translate it: ". . . an egg of hyacinth blue."

68

Edm.101. Meter, choriambic of 15 syllables without basis, (sometimes called "the greater Sapphic").
Hephaestion, *Handbook of Meter*. Also quoted by Attilius Fortunatus and by Servius as an example of the choriambic tetrameter.

* Cox 113

69

Edm.73. Meter, choriambic (greater Asclepiad).
From Aldus, grammarian, in *Cornucopia.*

1: Gyara is a barren island off Ceos and Andros.

70

Edm.59,60,61,62: fragments which probably belong to separate poems, epigrams or riddles. I have put them all together. Meter, 14-syllable.
From Demetrius on *Style,* Athenaeus *Doctors at Dinner,* Gregorius on Hermogenes.
Demetrius:

> The appeal of comedy, particularly, depends on hyperbole; and every hyperbole is an impossibility. For instance, this in Aristophanes . . . And so are such phrases as "healthier than a cucumber," "balder than a calm sea" and Sappho's . . .

Gregorius:

> The ear is improperly tickled by such erotic tricks of phrase as are found in Anacreon and Sappho, as for instance . . .*

71

Edm.75. Meter, choriambic (lesser Asclepiad) with a line of twelve syllables.
From Maximus of Tyre, essayist, in *Dissertations.*

72

Edm. 167. Meter, possibly Sapphic-16-syllables.
From the Scholiast on Apollonius of Rhodes in the latter's poem *Argonautica* (c.200 B.C.). It is not clear whether the words are Sappho's or Apollonius's. The Scholiast writes:

> The love story of Selene (the Moon) is told by Sappho

* With such innocuousness condemned, no wonder future puritanism was to heap Sappho's nine books onto the bonfire!

. . . and there it is said that Selene comes down to Endymion in this cave.

1: Weigall thinks that Sappho is the originator of the famous legend in which the Moon-goddess sees and falls in love with the young shepherd Endymion asleep in his cave on Mount Latmos: keeping him there eternally young and enjoying the passions she rouses him to in his dreams.

> She understood the reason why the goddess came night after night to the beautiful shepherd, yet would not permit him to awake. The Moon-goddess in her poem was herself: Endymion was ideal youth, physically to be desired, and in slumber not to be feared, a man in the response of breath to breath, of caress to caress, but not a man in that forcefulness which displeased her. Something in her temperament, moreover, reached with warmth to the thought of Selene's active, not passive, part in these tender pleasures of the night.*

73

ἐγω φᾶιμι Fιοπλόκων
Μόισαν ευ λάλεμεν

Edm. Vol. III, Adespota 25.
Meter, doubtful; or choriambic with first two words used as basis.
From Plut., Garr. 5 (Bergk, Adesp., p. 53). Haines thinks this fragment possibly by Alcaeus.

74

Edm.10. Meter, Sapphic.
From Appolonius on *Pronouns*.

75

Edm.32. Meter, Sapphic.
From Himerius, *Declamations*.

76

Edm.149. Meter, dactylic hexameter: found chiefly in

* Weigall 283

Sappho's epithalamia, from which this fragment is taken. Quoted by Demetrius (literary critic c.150 A.D.), *On Style:*

> Sometimes, too, Sappho achieves her charm through repetition, as in this passage on the Evening Star . . .

77

Edm.80. Meter, Glyconic.
Hermogenes, *On Kinds of Oratory,* talking of sweetness or charm:

> . . . and when Sappho takes to her lyre and it answers her.

Eustathius, *Iliad* xi/41, also mentions the fact that Sappho spoke to her lyre.

1: The word Sappho uses meant originally a tortoise shell. Here it means a lyre.

2: Hermes is credited in mythology with having invented the first lyre by stretching strings across the cavity of a tortoise shell. This became its sound box, the curved horns of a goat its arms.

3: As a musician Sappho seems to have been something of an innovator. A new form of harp with twenty strings is attributed to her by Athenaeus, and also the plectrum for striking the strings with. According to Aristoxenus she invented the mixolydian mode. There have been many guesses by scholars and musicologists as to what exactly this was. Aristoxenus describes it as: "particularly sensuous and emotive."

78

Edm.16. Meter, Sapphic.
From the Scholiast on Pindar:

> He gives us a vivid picture of the eagle perched on Zeus's scepter and, lulled to sleep by the music, relaxing both its wings. . . . Sappho on the other hand talks of the doves . . .

The MS. reading is ψυχρός (chill), emended for better sense to ψαῦχρος (swift or light), which in the context I translate as "faintheaded."

79

Edm.141. Meter, dactylic.
Apollonius on *Pronouns*.

80

Edm.45. Meter, Sapphic.
From a second-century papyrus: Oxy.Pap.1231/15.
The first and last stanzas are reconstructed by Hunt, Lobel, and Edmonds.

1: Basing myself on a text printed by Hill and making my own reconstruction, I give the following as a plausible reading:

> Oh, come back to me, I ask you, as quickly as you can—my rosebud, Gongyla, carrying your milk-white sail. My own longing surely is the breeze that blows you along, you exquisite thing. Yes, my tremulous heart is ready to see you come into port . . . and I—happy.

81

Edm.24. Meter, Sapphic.
From Philodemus, *Piety* (c.60 B.C.; discovered at Herculaneum).

1: There is some doubt whether Hecate or Peitho (goddess of persuasion) is being addressed. The latter—called daughter of Aphrodite—was, together with Hera, Artemis, Urania, and Aphrodite herself, one of the goddesses to whom sacrifice was made before the wedding ceremony.

82

Edm.66. Meter, a Sapphic variation of the epic dactylic hexameter: almost dactylic pentameter with an invariable fourteen syllables. Haines classes it among the choriambic or Aeolic rhythms characteristic of the Sapphic stanza (i.e., basically the trochee mingled with the dactyl).
From a third-century papyrus: Oxy.Pap.1232 fragment I.coll.ii/iii, and 2076 col.ii.

1: Page and others think it possible (but unprovable until we have more evidence) that this ode was a wedding song sung at a real wedding. To Sappho's hearers it

would have had a slightly archaic ring, suggesting a saga that went back hundreds of years to the heroic age. In point of fact, this poem—a comparatively recent discovery in the sands of Egypt—proves what had long been suspected, that Sappho, although usually composing in her own vernacular (Lesbian Aeolic), did occasionally borrow from epic dialect, vocabulary, and style. This ode, though for the most part Lesbian, imitates in several places Homeric phraseology. Sappho calls on two traditions, blending old and new. Meanwhile the picture she draws (as Page points out) is not taken from any epic model but from contemporary life.

3: Thebe is in Mysia, not to be confused with Thebes in Boeotia.

4: The words myrrh, cassia, frankincense, do not (according to Page) appear in any extant Greek literature before the time of Sappho, nor does Homer anywhere mention the burning of incense. See note on poem 45.

83

Edm.146. Meter, Aeolic.
From Athenaeus, *Doctors at Dinner.*

1: Haines suggests the marriage of Peleus and Thetis, or possibly Heracles and Hebe, is being alluded to in this wedding song.

2: It could have been sung by the bridegroom's party as a stirrup cup before the bridegroom set out for the bride's house, though more likely as the toast at the actual wedding banquet itself.

3: The bridegroom, having been bathed in sacred water —his hair curled, scented and crowned with a wreath of flowers—sets off toward sunset for the house of the bride and her parents. He and the best man are mounted on a chariot drawn by two horses or mules. A noisy crowd of young men accompany them. Music greets them at the bride's house, which, like the bridegroom's, is festooned with laurel, ivy, bay, and olive. He enters the canopy of greenery to the dinner party which precedes the marriage ceremony. It was in the course of the dinner that the

above toast was probably sung (and it must be remembered that this is only a fragment).*

4: At ordinary banquets the preliminary drink from which the libation was poured was unmixed wine, but the real drinking did not begin till the main courses had been served and eaten. The wine was poured into the water—not vice versa—and honey and spices sometimes added. Then a little was spilt onto the ground as a further libation and a hymn or song sung. Naked boys poured the wine for the guests—who, at Athens at least, did not include women unless hetairai. Athenaeus *Doctors at Dinner* writes:

> It was the custom among the ancients for the boys of noblest birth to pour out the wine. . . . The beautiful Sappho sings the praises of her brother Larichus as serving the wine in the town hall of Mytilene.

It is possible that women dined with men in Sappho's Lesbos, though this was not later Greek practice even apart from Athens. We know now from recent Etruscan discoveries in Italy that the Etruscan men and women dined together, sitting on couches. Though the Etruscan link with the Lydians (neighbors to Lesbos) is still only an hypothesis, it is tempting to make it throw light on what we know of the Lesbians (as well as on the Ionians and Trojans). See note 4 to poem 54.

84

Edm.191. Meter, dactylic.
From Pollux, *Vocabulary:*

> Mid-bossed cups and bath-stopper cups get their names from their shape, but the gold-bossed from the substance of which they are made, like Sappho's gold cup with a twisted node.

85

Edm.161. Meter, dactylic.
From Hephaestion, *Handbook of Meter.*
See note 3 to poem 83.

1: The bridegroom would normally be several years older

* See Weigall 202 ff.

than the bride and at least twenty. Probably he would have kept a mistress* for some years previously, "continence being regarded" (in Weigall's phrase), "as unwholesome." The favorite time for weddings was the month of Gamelion (γάμος wedding), which came between the end of January and the beginning of February, it being thought a good thing if the first child could be born at the beginning of the winter. In February the Greek spring is not far off.

86

Edm.148. Meter, dactylic hexameter with refrain.
From Demetrius, *On Style* (c.150 A.D.).

1: This bridal ditty might have been sung as the groom entered the bride's house, but more probably when he came back to his own after the bridal dinner, bringing the bride with him. They returned sitting together on the driving seat of his chariot, with the best man behind. A procession of men and women carrying torches and a group of singing bridesmaids, led by a flute player, accompanied the pair who "set out under a shower of flowers and a battery of cheers, jeers, and good wishes. The bridegroom's mother met them at the door of his home; and as the bride crossed the threshold the pair were pelted with confetti and grain, while the company sang the hymenaean hymn as above, which corresponded to the modern wedding march."†

2: "The singer of Lesbos": Cox thinks it possible that Terpander is meant, but the line may be merely a reference to Lesbian poets in general. Terpander, the lyric poet, was at the height of his genius about thirty years before Sappho was born. It is also perfectly possible that Sappho means herself.

* My friend Donald Lucas (Cambridge University) in a letter comments: "We know nothing of Lesbian society at this time except what can be gleaned from Sappho and Alcaeus, and this tells us little about keeping a mistress. In a slave-owning society sexual experience is not hard to come by, but I much doubt if a youth still living at home would 'keep' a mistress. Weigall's information is compiled from many times and places."
† Weigall 203

87

Edm.105. Meter, choriambic.
From Pollux, *Vocabulary.*

1: Hill takes the text as:

Ἀμφι δ' ἄβροις λαΐοις ἓν τεπύκασσεν

and translates:

She wrapped herself well up in a soft woolen garment.

2: Weigall, gleaning his basic information from the *Dictionary of Antiquities,* writes:

Weddings always took place in the evening. Some time during the afternoon the bride was given a ceremonial bath in holy-water obtained from some sacred well or stream, after which she was dressed in fine new clothes and a veil of transparent cambric was draped about her and over her flower-wreathed head, but not so as to conceal her rouged and painted little face or her hands with their well-manicured and red-stained finger-nails.*

88

Edm.157. Meter, Glyconic.
Reconstructed by Edmonds from Himerius, the rhetorician, *Wedding Song of Severus.*

1: The bride could be as young as fourteen among the Ionians, but not less than seventeen or eighteen among the Lesbians.

89

Edm.158. Meter, Aeolic.
From Choricius, *Wedding Song of Zachary:*

And so to please you again I shall ornament your bride with a song of Sappho's.

90

Edm.163. Meter, choriambic.
From Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *On Literary Composition.*

* Weigall 202–03

1: According to Aristaenetus, a writer of imaginary letters who flourished about 450 A.D., Sappho observed a stock order in her compositions for nuptials: she opened with an invocation to the Muses and Graces, and followed up with praises of the bride and groom. Himerius, the rhetorician (who wrote a hundred and fifty years earlier), says:

> It was her custom to liken the bridegroom to Achilles, comparing the young man's exploits to this hero's.

91

Edm.153. Meter, dactylic.
From *Inedita* (MS. in Paris) edited by Cramer, Oxford. 1.71.19.

92

Edm.150 and 151. Meter, hexameter.
From Scholiast on Hermogenes, *Kinds of Style,* and Demetrius, *On Style.*

1: In his detailed description of a wedding, Weigall says:

> The actual wedding ceremony was simple: the bridegroom took the bride's hand and led her to the altar of the household gods, a boy playing a flute walking ahead, and women holding flaming torches flanking them. No vows were made, but this presentation of the bride to the domestic gods of the bridegroom's family legalized the union; and immediately afterwards the bride's new mother-in-law led her to the bedroom, the bridesmaids pushing the girl from behind.*

2: Cox thinks that:

> The "sweet apple" to which Sappho refers was probably the result of a graft of apple on quince.†

Against this: the quince is yellow, not red; besides, it is only pears that are grafted onto quince. I asked the Royal Horticultural Society if Sappho could possibly have meant the sugar apple (*Annona squamosa*) or perhaps the

* Weigall 203–04
† Cox, Edwin Marion. *The Poems of Sappho.*

persimmon, which is orange-red and known in Italy as "dolce mele," "sweet apple"—exactly translating Sappho's γλυκύμαλον. I print the Royal Horticultural Society's detailed reply to my query:

> In reply to your enquiry concerning the "Sugar Apple," *Annona squamosa,* this is a small deciduous tree some 15–20 ft. in height, from tropical America. It has been widely cultivated in tropical areas for its greenish-yellow, glaucous fruits and has been known prior to the nineteenth century in Asia, where in some places it appears naturalised. I do not think however this could be the plant to which Sappho was referring as there is no evidence of earlier introduction into the East.
>
> With regard to the Persimmon, *Diospyros kaki,* this is native to China and Japan and was first known in British gardens about 1790. A related species, *D. lotus,* known as the "Date Plum" was introduced towards the end of the sixteenth century and is native to Western Asia and the Himalaya.
>
> There is, however, as far as I can trace, no evidence that either of these species was cultivated in ancient Greece. I think probably that Sappho was in fact referring to an Apple, perhaps not in the sense we know it today, but certainly a cultivated variety. The Apple has largely been derived from *Malus pumila,* a very variable species found wild in Western Asia, the Caucasus and Southern Europe and according to all the records has been cultivated from time immemorial. It was certainly grown by the ancient Etruscans and Pliny and other writers mention it many times. Epicurus (270 B.C.) certainly cultivated Apples and used methods, such as root pruning, which are still in use today. The famous botanist, De Candolle, in his book *The Origin of Cultivated Plants,* states: "The country in which the Apple appears to be most indigenous is the region between Trebizond (on the Black Sea) and Ghilan (on the Caspian Sea)."
>
> He also comments that they were evidently used for winter provision by the Lake dwellers of Parma, Savoy, Lombardy and Switzerland before they possessed metal, in the Stone Age. There is certainly proof that they have been grown since prehistoric times and for this reason I feel that probably Sappho's Apple is at least a derivation of

M. pumila, the ancestor of modern varieties. We do not however possess many historical accounts of plants here at Wisley and if you required more detailed information it would be better to write to the British Museum, who may be able to help you further.*

Some translators favor the *pomegranate;* which is not impossible.

3: The apple as sacred to Aphrodite was a recognized love symbol, cf. Aristophanes, *Clouds* 997, Theocritus, 6.6. with *Eclogues* 3.64: "Male me Galataea petit lasciva puella." Further instances in Gow's note on Theocritus, 5.88.

4: See my note about "hyacinth" in poem 67.

93

Edm.152. Meter, probably hexameter.
From Cramer, *Inedita.*

1: The bride's reluctance to proceed with the marriage was traditional sham. The bridesmaids pushed her from behind into the bridal chamber and called out encouragement. See poem 94.

94

Edm.84. Meter, mainly choriambic.
From a seventh-century manuscript, conjecturally restored.

95

Not in Edmonds. Found in Himerius, *Orations* 1/20, perhaps in imitation of Sappho. Weigall says: "seems to be Sappho's."

1: Himerius, the rhetorician, writing about 300 A.D.:

> It is she [Sappho] who after the mock combats enters the bridal precincts, decorates the room, spreads the couch, marshals the maidens at the bridal chamber, brings Aphro-

* For this helpful letter I am indebted to Mr. C. D. Brickell, Botanist, writing for the Director of the R.H.S. Gardens at Wisley at Ripley in Surrey.

dite in her car of Graces, and a bevy of Loves to play with her.*

2: The bride would find herself in a candlelit room, the floor spread with sweet bay and the freshly made bed strewn with flowers and wet with perfume. Here her companions left her, clustering outside the door to sing through the night. The bridegroom entered, urged on robustly by his troupe of young men. After locking the door "his first business was to unveil the bride and to eat a quince with her as a pledge of future sweetness of speech."†

96

Edm.47. Meter, probably Sapphic (Edmonds reconstructs it as Sapphic).
Three-quarters of the reconstruction is conjectural.

1: The bridesmaids probably kept up their wedding songs till dawn, stamping their feet in time and clapping.

2: Haines says:

> The writing of these epithalamia, or bridal songs, for friends and clients in Lesbos and elsewhere was an important and probably lucrative part of Sappho's professional work.††

97

Edm.154. Meter, dactylic tetrameter.
From Hephaestion, *Handbook of Meter.*

1: The groom's friend, the θυρωρός, stands guard outside the door, which the bridesmaids attempt to force in order to rescue the bride. Meanwhile, the young men outside bang and kick, shouting their encouragement through the keyhole.

2: Demetrius, *On Style:*

> Sappho uses another style to make fun of the (supposedly)

* *Orations,* I/4 f.
† Weigall 204
†† Haines 150

boorish bridegroom and the man who guards the wedding-room door. It is a very commonplace style and more like prose than poetry. In fact, these particular poems are better spoken than sung. They could hardly be adapted for the dance or the lyre, unless in a kind of dance dialogue.

98

Edm.159. Perhaps hexameter.
From Apollonius, *Conjunctions.*

99

Edm.155. Meter, choriambic plus iambic.
From Hephaestion, *Handbook of Meter.*

1: While the bridesmaids sing and the young men make a din (perhaps also sing, answering the girls) the marriage is consummated.

It was only when the bridegroom came to the door and announced that all was as it should be that the people outside took their departure, though the bridesmaids grouped themselves near and continued to sing for the greater part of the night.*

100

Edm.128. Meter, doubtful.
From *Treatise on Etymology:* on the word δαύω "to sleep."

101

Edm.160 and 162. Meter, Aeolic.
From Hephaestion, *Handbook of Meter* and from Servius (c.390 A.D.) on Virgil. Referred to also by Pollux and Julian.

102

Edm.141a. Meter, dactylic.
From *Treatise on Etymology.*

* Weigall 204

103

Edm.164. Meter, choriambic.
Demetrius, *On Style*.

104

Edm.65. Meter, 14-syllable.
From a third-century papyrus: Oxy.Pap.1232/1.

1: And so the marriage night ends. The bride and groom are left in peace to greet each other over the morning cup. Later in the day they will receive the congratulations of their friends. The following night, to give his bride the chance of a complete rest, the groom sleeps in the house of his father-in-law and does not return to her till the third night—after more celebrations and another dinner party.

105

Edm.18. Meter, Sapphic.
From *Treatise on Etymology*.

1: Haines, Hill, and others join together the fragments of Edm. 17 and 18 and read ἄνεμοι for ἄνοαι:

> . . . the drip of my pain—may driving winds bear it away with my sorrows.

106

Edm.121. Meter, Alcaic.
From Maximus of Tyre, *Dissertations:*

> And what his rivals Prodicus and Georgias and Thrasymachus were to Socrates, that were Gorgo and Andromeda to Sappho. Sometimes she scolds them, sometimes she trips them up in argument, using exactly the irony Socrates uses. For instance, Socrates says: "A very good day to Master Ion," and Sappho . . .

1: Some read Πολλυανάκτιδα as a proper name:

> A very good day to you, daughter of Pollyanax!

2: It is generally held that Andromeda was the mistress of a rival school of music and poetry at Mitylene and that Gorgo—a discarded friend of Sappho's—was one of the teachers. See poem 109. Since Andromeda could hardly boast of aristocratic lineage, it is clear that Sappho is here being sarcastic (if *she* is meant—but the reference could equally be to Gorgo).

107

Edm.55. Meter, dactylic.
From Aldus, *Cornucopia* quoted by Choeroboscus (about 600 A.D.).

1: The Greek is:

. . . having had quite enough of Gorgo.

See note to poem 106.

108

Edm.74. Meter, choriambic (lesser Asclepiad).
From *Treatise on Etymology.*

109

Edm.81. Meter, Aeolic tetrameter.
From Hephaestion, *Handbook of Meter.*

1: Weigall writes:

> Atthis was a young girl; Sappho a woman in the later twenties, when the affair began. They were "bound together," says Suidas, "by an affection which was slanderously declared to be shameful"; and it must have been chiefly on account of this slander, if slander it be, that Sappho's poems—so many of them addressed to Atthis—were burnt.*

Whatever the cause of Atthis' later desertion of Sappho there is no record that the two were ever reconciled. See also notes to poems 54 and 106, and poem 27 (if indeed this refers to Atthis rather than to Anactoria), and poem 116.

* Weigall 118

110

Edm.98. Meter, possibly choriambic.
From Athenaeus, *Doctors at Dinner:*

> . . . Sappho makes fun of Andromeda.

See note to poem 106.

111

Edm.49. Meter, 14-syllable.
From Apollonius, *Pronouns.*
He does not explicitly attribute this fragment to Sappho.

112

Edm.28. Only two words in the Greek.
From Maximus of Tyre, *Dissertations:*

> Diotima (in Plato's *Symposium*) says that Love flourishes when he is rich but dies when he is poor. Sappho put the two together and called him *bitter-sweet* (poem 109) and *giver of pain.* Socrates calls Love a wizard (sophistical), and Sappho a *weaver of tales.*

1: Pausanias (c.180 A.D.) says that:

> Sappho sang a lot of things about love that do not always agree.

113

Not in Edm. Meter, doubtful.
From Plutarch, *Symposium* 1/5/1.

114

Edm.90. Meter, unclassified.
From Aristides, *Orations* (in praise of Smyrna):

> . . . the glamour over the whole city, not as Sappho said, stunning the eyes, but magnifying it and crowning and watering it with buoyancy—not exactly "like a larkspur" but in a way that earth and sun have never before declared to man.

1: See note about ὑάκινθος "hyacinth" in poem 67.

115

Edm.21. Meter, Sapphic.
From the Scholiast on Apollonius of Rhodes' *Argonautica:*

(whether Jason's cloak was red or particolored?)

116

Edm.48. Meter, Sapphic-14-syllables.*
From Hephaestion, *Handbook of Meter,* on the Aeolic line.

117

Edm.69. Meter, choriambic (greater Asclepiad).
From Pollux (c.180 A.D.), *Vocabulary.*

1: Probably the description of a dream.

118

Edm.106. Meter, dactylic.
From Diogenian, *Centuries of Proverbs:*

Said of those who will not take the sour with the sweet (or the thorns with the rose).

119

Not given in Edm., but D68 and LP 65. Meter, Ionic tetrameter of 16 syllables. From Oxy.Pap.1787 fragment 4.
The poem is so severely mutilated that even in these ten lines only 42 syllables out of 160 are extant. On these and something of a known context, I have based a reconstruction. It is interesting to compare this with Barnstone's translation of the Greek words as they stand:

Andromeda
forgot

* Reputedly the meter of the whole of Sappho's second book.

And I too
blamed you,

yet Sappho
I loved you

In Kypros I am Queen
and to you a power

as sun of fire
is a glory to all.

Even in Hades
I am with you.

Admirable in its own way though this is, the method has its own pitfalls. It would be oversanguine to imagine that by keeping strictly to the remains of Sappho's words—without the possibility of reconstruction through scholarship or the attempt to do so by historical imagination—we necessarily come nearer to the sense of the original. We might on occasion get even further away. By analogy, for instance, compare the following from *Antony and Cleopatra* (supposing that only these words were extant and were linked syntactically):

She sat in
a burnished throne
the water was beaten
gold. The sails
[were] lovesick. The
silver tune of the flute
made the water follow
amorous [of]
her own person . . .

with the real passage:

The barge she sat in, like a burnished throne
Burned on the water; the poop was beaten gold,
Purple the sails and so perfumed, that
The winds were lovesick with them, the oars were silver
Which to the tune of flutes kept stroke, and made
The water which they beat to follow faster,
As amorous of their strokes. For her own person,
It beggar'd all description.

It would be easy to find more extreme examples still:

Not to be:
that is the question.
'Tis nobler to take arms
against a sea of troubles
and die.

Almost the reversal of what Hamlet said.

120

Edm.125. Meter, hendecasyllabic.
From Hephaestion, *Handbook of Meter.*
See also notes to poems 106, 109, 110.

1: Some translate:

Andromeda has got herself a pretty bargain.

121

Edm.119. Meter, Alcaeus' proposal is Sapphic with an extra syllable at the beginning (which used to be called "anacrusis"); Sappho's answer Alcaic.
The first line is from Hephaestion, 80, the rest from Aristotle (writing about 330 B.C.) *Rhet.*1/9.

1: Alcaeus, born about 600 B.C. (or probably earlier), shared with Sappho not only the distinction of being exiled for a time from Mytilene, but also preeminence as a monodic lyric poet. His poems are concerned with politics and war, love and wine. A typical theme is:

Drink, for one day you will die and there is no return from Hades. Do not hope to be immortal. Love the present moment while you are young.

He seems to have been an attractive if rather roisterous person. His sense of humor balked at nothing. After a battle he once wrote home celebrating the fact that he was safe and that his unconquerable shield had had the honor of being captured and hung up by the enemy before the blue gaze of Pallas Athene. In which act of enlightened cowardice he had Archilochus as a precedent and Horace as an imitator.

2: Haines comments:

In the lines attributed to Alcaeus . . . he uses a meter which

is neither Alcaic nor Sapphic, but like both, being a Sapphic line with anacrusis and having one syllable more than the Alcaic. Sappho answers him in his own Alcaic stanza, intended no doubt by the compliment implied to soften the rebuke administered.*

3: Ivor Brown's comment:

These are interesting verses to come from the "roaring boy" of the city in whom scruple about seduction was likely to be scanty. Some suppose that he wanted to marry her, but the words of his verse suggest that he wanted her "without string"; to ask for that, he felt ashamed.†

122

Edm. 58. Meter, 14-syllable.
Quoted by Galen, writing about 160 A.D., *Exhortation to Learning:*

And so it is better, since we know that the heyday of youth is like the flowers of spring and its pleasures fleeting, to agree with the Lady of Lesbos and say . . .

He adds that Solon said much the same thing. Compare Ben Jonson:

How near to good is what is fair!

123

Edm.120. Meter, a form of Alcaic.
From Athenaeus, *Doctors at Dinner* (on lover's eyes):

To a man exceedingly admired for his appearance and reckoned good-looking.

1: Weigall comments:

These words seem to have been written to a youth who was shy of her, for they suggest a certain condescension on her part; and one imagines her, thus, greatly attracted by the handsome appearance of this young man with the beautiful eyes, who, either because of his youth or his humble social standing, had bowed himself before so famous a lady. Perhaps it was this selfsame personage who, having been led on by her and allowed to become intimate with her,

* Haines 210
† Ivor Brown 116

lost his head and asked her to marry him, thus evoking that sad cry from her: "I am too old."* (poem 124)

124

Edm.99. Meter, Glyconic.
From Stobaeus, *Anthology:* on the advisability in marriage of taking into account the ages of the parties.

1: It is sometimes supposed that Sappho is here addressing Alcaeus, but as far as we can tell Alcaeus was older than Sappho. (Otherwise there is evidence that might indicate that he was in love with her till the day of her death.)

2: Weigall suggests that she may be addressing the youth Phaon, for unrequited love of whom she is supposed to have leapt to her death from the Leucadian cliff. Weigall is almost the only modern scholar who attempts to substantiate this tradition.

125

Edm.136. Meter, dactylic. This is a refrain.
From Marius Plotius, *Meter.* I have preserved the meter in the English.

1: Adonis lived four months of the year with Aphrodite, four with Persephone, and four alone.

2: Haines and others read: *γέσπετ' γμήναιον*, which would mean: "Sing out the wedding song: Ah for Adonis!"

126

Edm.100. Meter, choriambic.
From the Scholiast on Pindar:

> Wealth bedecked with virtue makes possible all manner of things.

1: Sappho herself was undoubtedly a rich woman. Even if we did not know this from the fact that she married "a very rich business man,"† the internal evidence of her

* Weigall 286
† Suidas or—more correctly—the *Suda*. What it says is that he was rich, and that he came from or possibly traded from Andros.

poems is enough to show that she was surrounded by all the appurtenances of refinement, even luxury. So too her exile, her travels, her social standing in Lesbos.

127

Edm.110.
From the Scholiast on Pindar, corroborated by Pausanias. Edmonds has constructed the verses out of an adaptation of the Scholiast's citation.

1: Pausanias:

> The poetess of Lesbos is witness that gold is not tarnished by rust.

128

Edm.71. Meter, choriambic (greater Asclepiad).
From Stobaeus, *Anthology* (on Folly):

> Sappho, to a woman of no education.

Plutarch mentions the occasion twice: once as written to a rich woman and again when he says that the crown of roses was assigned to the Muses, remembering that Sappho had said the same words to an uncultured woman.

1: Weigall suggests that these harsh words were for Sappho's bête-noire, Andromeda.

2: "Roses of Pieria" is of course a metaphor for poetry, Pieria, at the foot of Mount Olympus, being one of the traditional homes of the Muses.

129

Not included by Edmonds. Meter, Sapphic-14-syllables.
From Stobaeus, *Anthology* 26 (Bergk 32[n]).

Λαθα πίερισι στυγέρα και ἀνάρσιος

130

Edm.116. Meter, Sapphic-16-syllables.
From Hephaestion, *Handbook of Meter*.

1: Haines and others read ἐίραννα (Eiranna, a girl's name) instead of ἐίρηνα (Peace).

131

Edm.140. Meter, hexameter.
From Gellius, *Attic Nights,* on Niobe's children:

> For Homer says she had six of either sex, Euripides seven, Sappho nine, and Bacchylides and Pindar ten.

1: Probably spoken in sarcasm. When Niobe boasted that she had more children than Leto, Leto's children—Apollo and Artemis—killed Niobe's children.

132

Edm.51. Meter, 14-syllable.
From Herodian, *Words Without Parallel*—not explicitly ascribed to Sappho.
Some read ἄλλαν μοι instead of ἀλλ' ἄν μή:

> Go and boast to someone else about your ring.

133

Not given in Edmonds. Text from Page. Meter, predominantly Glyconic.
From a third-century papyrus, one of the most recent to be published by the Egypt Exploration Society. The number of stanzas is uncertain. The last stanzas are particularly sketchy and I have telescoped them together to get sense. (They may not even belong to the same poem.)

1: It appears that Sappho is in exile. One of the Cleanactidae—probably the tyrant Myrsilus—is in power. The shops of Mytilene are inaccessible to Sappho, who thinks wistfully of her remnants of finery: memorials to happier days. According to a scholia, she and other recalcitrant citizens had, by order, taken up residence in the town of Pyrrha: a town in the center of Lesbos, overlooking the inlet of Pyrrha. In another banishment (it is difficult to determine whether before or after this) she went to live in Sicily.

2: Sardis in Lydia was a center of feminine fashion.

Edm.36. Meter, Sapphic.
From a third-century papyrus. My text is compiled from Edmonds, Page, and Haines.

1: Edmonds thinks the poem may have been in the form of a letter handed to Charaxus on his return from Egypt, asking for a reconciliation. He was the eldest of Sappho's three brothers, all of whom were probably junior to her. Her favorite appears to have been Larichus, the youngest.

2: The poem has five stanzas, the last of which—except for a few words—is missing. I find Edmonds' reconstruction of it a little too coarse-grained for Sappho (though she certainly had a temper) and have left it out:

> and as for thee (Doricha), thou black and baleful she-dog, thou mayst set that evil snout to the ground and go a-hunting other prey.

3: Charaxus was at the time engaged in shipping wine from Lesbos to the Greek colony of Naucratis in Egypt. There he became infatuated with the beauty of Rhodopis —Rosycheeks—a famous courtesan and slave whose real name was Doricha. He bought her freedom at a great price and Sappho was shocked: perhaps not so much by the fact as by the extravagance of the liaison. After his return to Mytilene (or perhaps before) he expressed annoyance at his sister's interference and at her spreading the tale of his indiscretions. She seems then to have rounded on him with a poem which reduced him to ridicule. This we do not have (unless poem 138 is the last stanza of it).

4: Weigall supposes Doricha-Rhodopis to have been in her late twenties about this time (c.566 B.C.), basing his computation on the fact that she had once been the fellow slave of Aesop, who was probably born c.620 B.C. He thinks Charaxus was about forty-four and Sappho herself forty-six. Charaxus

> is described as a refined, elegant personage, a man of taste and culture, who made a large fortune in the wine trade, but was sufficiently hardy and enterprising to conduct his

own business and to come himself each year to Egypt with his fleet of wine-laden ships.*

5: Athenaeus, *Doctors at Dinner,* writes: "The following epigram on Doricha was composed by Poseidippus, who often refers to her in his *Aesopeia:*"

Doricha, only your bones now
Are decked by the rope of your hair
So soft and long
And that mantle breathing myrrh
You drew round Charaxus, fair—
Folding his flesh to yours
Till the time of the morning cup.
And now the white speaking pages
Of the love song of Sappho abide,
Abiding forever,
And your name is blessed and kept
By Naucratis as hers
So long as a ship from the sea
Goes sailing along
The sandy sides of the Nile.

See Also Notes 3 and 4 to Poem 138.

135

Edm.35. Meter, Sapphic.
From a third-century papyrus and a seventh-century manuscript.

1: Edmonds and others take this as probably a letter to the erring Charaxus. It is difficult to say what its order is in the series of Sappho's representations to her brother.

2: Of the four stanzas, the first is lost except for the last word, and the last so mutilated that what is given here is only conjecturally restored. (See notes on poem 134.)

136

Edm.70. Meter, choriambic.
Cited by Priscian (writing in the fifth century A.D.), *Grammar.*

* Weigall 239

137

Not in Edmonds. Meter, fragmentary.
Quoted by Athenaeus, *Doctors at Dinner.*

—πολλὰ δ' ἀναρίθμα
ποτήρια καλαῖφις

138

Edm.37. Meter, Sapphic.
From a second-century papyrus: Oxy.Pap. 7. I have compiled my text from Edmonds, Page, and Haines.

1: Of the three stanzas only this and fragments of the others survive.

2: The poem appears to be another derisory letter from Sappho to her brother Charaxus on the Rhodopis affair (Sappho calls her by her real name, Doricha). The sense of the letter is taunting, pretending to repeat the gossip going the rounds in Naucratis and Mytilene: "Doricha's made a good swap of bedmates, hasn't she!"

3: Herodotus, writing about 450 B.C., says:

> Rhodopis was in her heyday during the reign of Amasis. . . . She was Thracian by birth, slave to Iadmon the son of Hephaestopolis, and fellow slave of Aesop the fable writer. . . . Rhodopis arrived in Egypt under the conduct of Xanthes the Samian. She came to ply her trade, but was redeemed at a high price by a man from Mytilene—Charaxus, son of Scamandronymus and brother of Sappho the poetess. Rhodopis, thus liberated, remained in Egypt; and such were her charms that she made a great fortune. . . .*

Charaxus actually married her.

4: Weigall writes:

> The end of the story is not known. It may be that Doricha failed to hold his love, or he to retain hers: at any rate, we read that she resumed her career as a courtesan and in so doing accumulated vast wealth. Glamorous tales of her beauty and profligacy gathered around her, and centuries

* Herodotus ii/134 f.

after her day she was remembered as a brilliant figure, the heroine of many legends.*

See notes to poem 134.

139

Edm.92.
Adapted from a letter of Eustathius' in *Opuscula.*

1: See notes to poems 134 and 138.

140

Edm.15. Meter, possibly Sapphic.
From a second-century papyrus: Oxy.Pap.1231.16.11–12.

141

Edm.137. Meter, dactylic tetrameter split into dimeters of five syllables.
From Plutarch, *On Restraining Anger.*

142

Edm.78. Meter, probably choriambic.
From the Scholiast on Apollonius of Rhodes' *Argonautica.*

1: This looks like one of Sappho's proverbs. The phrase she uses can mean either a heap of small stones or the pebbles on the beach. The first could denote the little piled-up mounds used to designate sacred precincts and her phrase would then mean: Don't meddle with sacred things; the second, *as* I have translated it, with the connotation: Let sleeping dogs lie.

143

Edm.11. Meter, Sapphic.
Adapted from a citation by Aristides, *On the Extemporized Addition.*

144

Edm. 76 and 77. Meter, choriambic.

* Weigall 243

The two fragments, not necessarily from the same poem, are quoted by Dio Chrysostom, writing about 100 A.D., in his *Discourses*. His comment is: "Said with perfect beauty."

1: ἀμμέων strictly "us" (shall remember *us*) but here as elsewhere in Sappho probably of singular intent.

145

Edm.43. Meter, Sapphic.
From a second-century papyrus: Oxy.Pap.1231/13.
Emended and almost entirely reconstructed by Edmonds.

146

Edm.114. Meter, Ionic.
From Hephaestion, *Handbook of Meter*. He does not say these lines are Sappho's.

147

Edm.112. Meter, form of choriambic.
From Hephaestion, *Handbook of Meter*.

148

Edm.84A. Meter, uncertain.
Conjecturally restored from a citation by Libanius in *Orations,* where he seems to be referring to the story of Zeus's night with Alcmena when Heracles was conceived. Sappho's words, however, may well come from one of her lost bridal songs.

149

Edm.34. Meter, probably Sapphic.
From *Berliner Klassikertexte* 5 P 5006.
The fragment has been torn in half, leaving only the last few words of each line. I translate them as they stand, without any attempt at reconstruction.

150

Edm.82. Meter, hendecasyllabic.
From a seventh-century manuscript. Very tentatively re-

stored by Edmonds: many even of the few extant words and letters in the MS. are only doubtfully legible.

1: Sappho apparently is recalling the scene described in a letter Atthis once sent to her. Weigall imagines the scene:

> It seems that Sappho had taken her daughter Cleïs and some of the girls, including Atthis, to stay during the hot summer months in the cool wooded uplands, perhaps on the slopes of the Lesbian Olympus; but in the autumn . . . her young companions were tired of their rustic life and were eager to get back to Mytilene. At last one day she promised to take them home on the morrow; but at mid-morning she was still in bed, and Atthis, impatient to be off, wrote her a letter which, I suppose, was to be sent in to her by a servant and which Sappho afterwards put into verse.*

2: Weigall's account does not easily accord with Sappho's phrase "among us again." It is more likely that Sappho was by herself in the hills and the rest of the girls in Mytilene. Possibly (as Edmonds suggests) this was the day of her return to Mytilene after her first exile in the town of Pyrrha in the center of the island.

3: "A grandlier breakfast": literally "sweeter." The ordinary Greek breakfast on the mainland was bread dipped in wine.

151

Edm.113A. Meter, Anacreontic and Ionic.
From a papyrus of about 100 A.D. The readings are various.

1: Weigall, plausibly, but without secure foundation, comments:

> She was bitterly conscious of her years, and the slow process of the departure of her charms was watched by her in her mirror with increasing despair. There were still left to her, however, her personal magnetism, her grace, her graciousness, her elegance, her wit, and her brains; and these qualities, together with her fame and her wealth,

* Weigall 119

evidently retained for her her social leadership in Mytilene; and filled her house with her friends and admirers.*

See also poems 152, 158, and possibly 155.

152

Edm.42. Meter, Sapphic.
From a second-century papyrus: Oxy.Pap.1231/10.
Restored, almost in its entirety, by Edmonds. Hill takes τότ' ὀν instead of τάχ' ὀν and translates (without justification):

> . . . then of course I would be only too delighted to come, *with trembling footsteps . . .*

153

Edm.103. Meter, choriambic.
From Hephaestion, *Handbook of Meter.*

154

Edm.135. Meter, irregular Ionic or Aeolic.
From Hephaestion, *Handbook of Meter.*

1: Haines comments:

> Probably based on a folksong such as is found in many languages, e.g., in ours:
> "Oh mother put the wheel away
> I cannot sing tonight."†

2: Some read βραδίναν instead of βραδίνω: broken by *"soft* Aphrodite's spell."

155

Edm.122. Meter, Ionic a minore.
From Hephaestion, *Handbook of Meter.*

1: Of the two daughters of Pandion who were changed into birds, Procne is usually said to be the swallow and Philomela the nightingale. The swallow for Sappho sug-

* Weigall 284
† Haines 118

gests not only spring but love and passion: (Tereus, Procne's husband, ravished her sister).

156

Edm.131. Meter, trochaic.
From the Scholiast on the *Plutus* of Aristophanes, to show the meaning of the word ἡμιτύβιον:

> equivalent to "sudarium," a half-worn piece of linen like a dishcloth; compare Sappho . . .

In fact a "napkin."

157

Edm.134. Meter, uncertain: ⏑ – ⏑ – – – ⏑ ⏑ – ⏑ ⏑ –, but at least dactylic in effect.
From Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics:* "But love is a wily thing, as they say of Aphrodite."
It is not certain that Sappho is speaking of herself, since (in the Greek) the subject of the sentence is missing.

158

Edm.Appendix 118A. Meter, Sapphic-16-syllables.
From a third-century papyrus: Oxy.Pap.1787/3/3.

1: So much of this fragment has been restored by conjecture (Edmonds) that I have adapted rather than translated the reconstituted Greek text.

159

Edm.91. Meter, choriambic, lesser Asclepiad (if our restoration is correct).
From Aristotle, *Rhetoric.*

160

Edm.14. Meter, Sapphic.
From Apollonius, *Pronouns.*

161

Edm.50. Meter, Aeolic dactylic pentameter.
From Apollonius, *Pronouns.*

162

Edm.143. Meter, elegiac.*
From *Palatine Anthology*. The ascription to Sappho is doubtful: the note in the MS. says: "Not in Michael's copy, so I do not know its origin."

1: The inscription on the base of the statue is to a nameless baby girl whose mother, a priestess of Artemis, dedicated her to that goddess as a thank offering.

2: Haines and others read: παῖδες, ἄφωνος . . . "Children, though dumb, etc."

3: "Aethopia" in the Greek text is the goddess Artemis. The meaning of the word literally is "burnt-face."

163

Edm.144. Meter, elegiac.
From the *Palatine Anthology*. Haines and others believe the ascription to Sappho doubtful.

1: Haines notes:

> Nothing is known of Timas as a friend of Sappho's unless we accept Edmonds' emendation of fragment (44) where he introduces the name of Timas (relying probably on *this* fragment). See *Proceedings of the Classical Association* 1921.†

See also *Glossary* of Hesychius, where there is a reference to Timadia ("Little Timas") in a quotation without context. Donald Lucas, writing to me from Cambridge, comments: "That ἀπυφθιμένας could mean 'die a long way from home' is wildly unlikely, and would not have been suggested but for the unjustified intrusion of Timas into Edm. fragment 87."

2: Weigall writes:

> From this epitaph it is perhaps to be gathered that the girl

* The elegiac is said to have been invented for use with the flute, but these words were an inscription for a monument and are unlikely ever to have been sung.
† Haines 176

died in Sappho's house at Mytilene and that her ashes were sent to Phokaea for interment.*

It appears then that Timas was an Ionian from Phocaea, the northernmost city of the Ionian Confederacy.

3: Another possible translation of the first three words is:

This dust is poor little Timas.

164

Edm. *Lyra Graeca,* III, p.438 (1940). Meter, perhaps Aeolic dactylic pentameter.
From the Scholiast on Sophocles' *Electra.* Edmonds ascribes it to Sappho or Alcaeus.

165

Edm.145. Meter, elegiac.
From the *Palatine Anthology.* Haines and others doubt the ascription to Sappho. I think that this doubt, from internal evidence at least, is ill-founded. . . . (Shall some New Zealander one day, finding in the ashes of London *Old Possum's Book of Cats,* say: "No one can suppose that this is by T. S. Eliot!"? Which words Haines uses of Sappho.)

166

Not in Edm. but in LP Incert. and T p.16. It is from the large collection of papyri at Vienna, R. Rainer 29.777a. (Rainer was the archduke who gave his name to the collection.) Meter, Sapphic.
There are merely three lines in the Greek, and even these contain barely half their words. The problem of translation is exactly that posed by 119, 149, 66, and all those tantalizing fragments where there is not enough left to reconstruct the Greek but enough to make sense in English. Of which sense one must be particularly beware, as I point out in poem 119. Here, for instance, the subject of τελέσθην ("was brought to pass") is missing, and we can only guess at it. Lobel and Page give no warrant even for τελέσθην.

* Weigall 274

167

Edm.Appendix: 50A. Meter, Sapphic-14-syllables.
From a third-century papyrus: Oxy.Pap.1356/4a/114; in which Philo (the Jewish philosopher, first century A.D.), on the subject of punishment, says the penitent "gives way to the good advice of the poetess Sappho when she says . . ."

168

Edm.85. Meter, Aeolic (Glyconic with extra dactyl).
From the reverse of the manuscript of fragment 148. More than half restored by Edmonds.

1: Edmonds omits the fragmentary opening:

. . . ἦρ' ἀ [. . .
δῆρα το [. . .

and translates: "It won't be long now . . ."

169

Meter, Sapphic-16-syllables. Oxy.Pap.XV/1787 fragment 4.
Not given in Edmonds. Denys Page 65. Only about a quarter of each line survives.

170

Edm.108. Meter, choriambic (lesser Asclepiad if we supply before the first line).
From Maximus of Tyre, *Dissertations* (on what was the nature of Socrates' love affairs):

> Socrates scolds his wife Xanthippe for weeping when he is about to die, and so does Sappho scold her daughter.

1: It is hard to reconcile this fragment with the story that Sappho leapt to her death for love of the youth, Phaon. Weigall, one of the few who believe the legend, writes:

> . . . her reference to Death . . . may perhaps have been inspired by a recent close approach to the dark portals of the dreaded underworld. . . . But the fact that these carefully turned lines were included amongst her poems rather sug-

gests that they were not composed when she was actually about to die but that they were written up, when her health was restored, as a poetical record of an injunction given by her at the time when she was ill.*

171

Edm.111. Meter, Aeolic or irregular Ionic ("the soft meter of languor").
From Hephaestion, *Handbook of Meter.*

1: Cox notes that with the "Hymn to Aphrodite" this "singularly beautiful fragment" was the first portion of the poems of Sappho printed in 1554.

2: Page will not bring himself to say that this fragment is by Sappho: the evidence is not against, but neither is it in favor of the attribution. A. W. Gomme takes him to task for this in *Journal of Hellenic Studies* LXXVII, 1957, and Page makes a brief reply in *JHS* LXXVIII, 1958.

* Weigall, Arthur. *Sappho of Lesbos: Her Life and Times.* London: Thornton Butterworth, 1932.

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